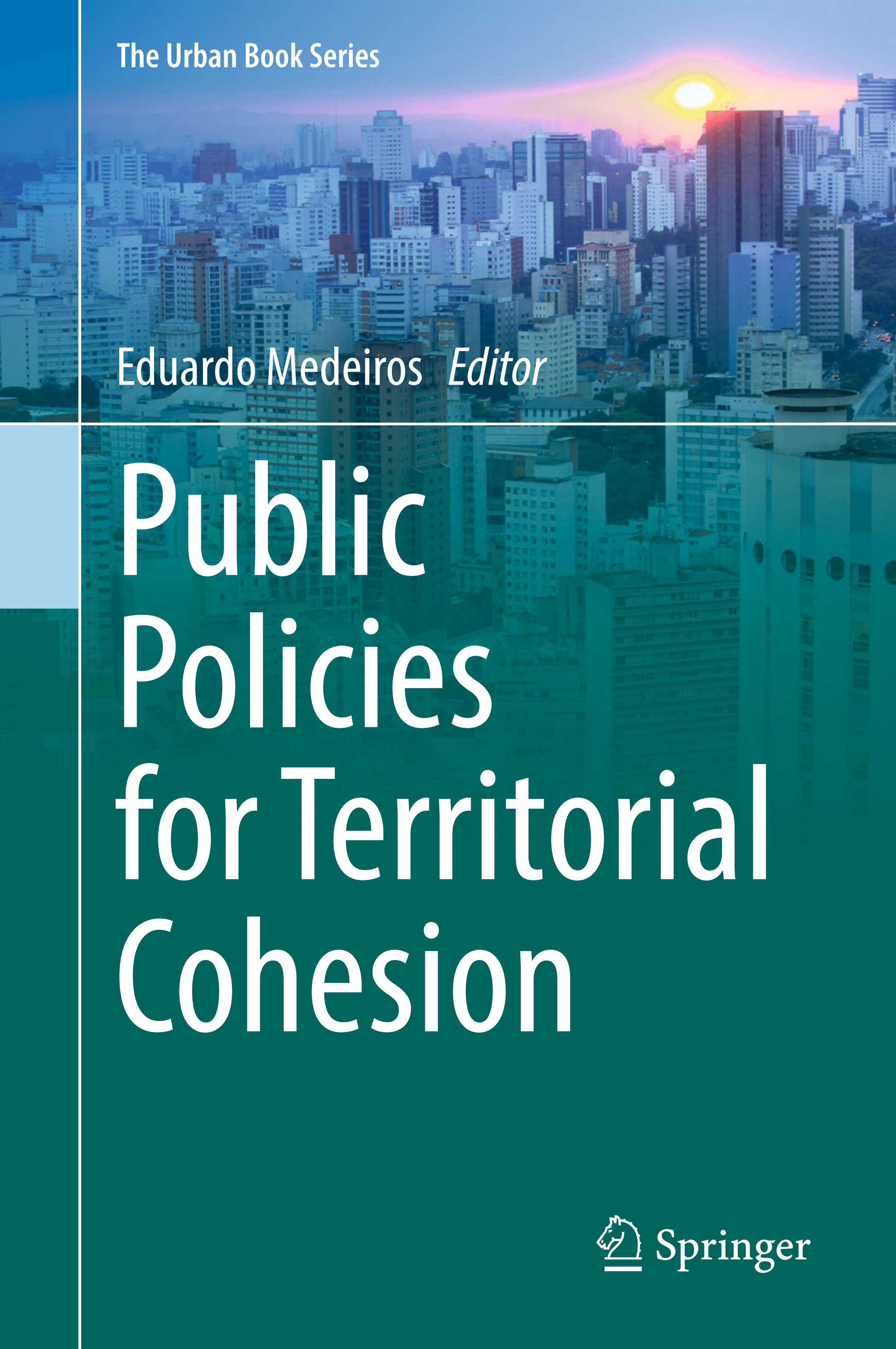

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Public Policies for Territorial Cohesion

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Eduardo Medeiros
Editor

Public Policies for Territorial Cohesion

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Foreword

The newly launched ESPON 2030 Programme has a mission to provide territorial evidence to stakeholders at all levels in order to help them achieve green transition to climate-neutral economies, while ensuring at the same time just living conditions for all people in all places.

While embarking on the two pillars of the EU Cohesion Policy, namely: Green and Just Transition, ESPON adds to that the territorial dimension, through promoting functional area's and place-based approach to development actions, projects and initiatives.

ESPON advocates for the central role of Territorial Cohesion in design, implementation and evaluation of public policies. To achieve that, ESPON delivers observations on territorial trends, patterns, challenges and opportunities in the territory of the 27 EU Members States and the four Partner States of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland, and facilitates the transfer of territorial knowledge to stakeholders at all levels, from the EU down to the local.

Under this stance, this Book offers a useful tool to both academic, decision-makers, and practitioners, to better align the implementation of public policies towards a more cohesive European territory. It does so by debating critical dimensions of Territorial Cohesion, such as economic competitiveness, social inclusion, environmental sustainability, territorial governance/cooperation and spatial planning.

Wiktor Szydarowski
Director of the ESPON EGTC
Luxembourg, Luxembourg

Introduction

Abstract Despite being mentioned in some European Union (EU) official documents since the early 2000s, territorial cohesion has been a very much misunderstood policy concept, and not many books have been published to extend debate on its conceptual and policy relevance. In this context, the proposal of this book is to discuss the role of public policies in promoting territorial cohesion processes in all the main dimensions of the territorial cohesion concept. In this stance, here for the first time in a book, all these dimensions are addressed, considering 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 sustainability; (iii) reinforcing and improving the territorial cooperation/governance processes; and (iv) reinforcing and establishing a more polycentric urban system".

Keywords Territorial Cohesion · EU Cohesion Policy · Territorial Agendas · EU Development Agendas · Territorial Development

From this outlook, this book presents a novel and more comprehensive analysis of territorial cohesion, supporting a logic of the structure and the content of the chapters. In Part I, EU and national public policies for territorial cohesion are debated, and the following four parts are respectively dedicated to each of the previously mentioned main analytic dimensions of territorial cohesion. As such, this book has the potential to attract to a vast audience of academics and policymakers, not only on the scientific fields of regional and urban studies but also in: (i) spatial planning and development theory; (ii) EU policies applied to European territories; (iii) socioeconomic development; (iv) environmental sustainability; (v) territorial cooperation and (vi) territorial governance.

In a context in which the EU and national entities have struggled to find strategies to achieve more balanced and cohesive territories at the national level, this book provides critical debate on these EU and national strategies, whilst proposing theoretical and practical policy responses which can invert current territorial exclusion trends vis-à-vis those of intended territorial cohesion. These analyses will be addressed in Part I of the book, in two chapters. Chapter 1, written by the editor, is focused on discussing the extent to which mainstream EU development strategies and EU Cohesion Policy are aligned and contribute to promoting territorial cohesion polices at all territorial levels. Chapter 2 complements the previous one by addressing the role of national policies to foster territorial cohesion, based on a very recent implementation of the EU Recovery Plan in Portugal. Part I of the book thus provides a comprehensive introduction to contemporary thinking about how public policies in certain areas can play a decisive role in boosting territorial cohesion processes in a given territory.

Part II of the book embraces a crucial dimension of territorial cohesion policies: socioeconomic cohesion. This dimension encompasses two main policy processes and respective components. Firstly, the process of economic competitiveness and secondly the process of social cohesion. Ultimately, a more balanced, harmonious and cohesive territory requires public policies which address socioeconomic development policies with the aim of reducing socioeconomic disparities. In this line, this part of the book analyses the contribution of socioeconomic development processes, with a particular focus on the discussion of social protection (Chap. 3) and social collaboration in cross-border territories (Chap. 4), and its potential policy contribution towards more cohesive territories.

Part III addresses yet another critical territorial cohesion dimension: environmental sustainability. Crucially, in an age of global warming and increasing pollution of all sorts, green public policies are crucial in promoting sustainable development for the protection of our planet and species. These sustainable, development-based policies should provide an insightful guide to all public development and cohesion policies, and their capacity to promote environmental protection and a green and circular economy needs to be considered when measuring territorial development trends in a given territory. As in the previous and following parts of the book, this part includes two chapters. The first (Chap. 5) is dedicated to examining the potential role of the current Territorial Agenda (2030) to address the environmental challenges faced by European territories towards increasing spatial justice and cohesion. As a complement, the next chapter (Chap. 6) addresses the increasingly important policies supporting sustainable urbanization, which are particularly relevant in a highly urbanised continents such as Europe.

Following the previous part of the book, this part is now centred on the debate around the importance of urban-related policies in promoting more harmonious, balanced and cohesive territories. The rationale behind these analyses is that more connected, polycentric, dense and efficient urban systems can contribute to increasing territorial cohesion. To this end, sound and effective spatial planning processes are required. As such, the first chapter in this part (Chap. 7) examines the role of urban and regional planning for implementing territorial cohesion policies. In addition, in Chap. 8 a more generic academic analysis is laid out on the role of spatial planning in effectively supporting territorial cohesion policies.

The last part of this book is dedicated to the debate on two increasingly recognised processes of sound territorial development, also viewed by some as a pillar for achieving territorial cohesion processes: territorial cooperation and governance. Hence, Chap. 9 reviews the implemented European territorial cooperation programmes since the early 1990s and assesses their potential positive contribution for promoting a more integrated and balanced European territory by, for instance, mitigating all sorts of border barriers across Europe. In turn, the last chapter (Chap. 10) builds on the discussion of implemented European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTCs) in Europe to solidify multi-level territorial governance processes, as a means to achieving more cohesive territories.

Reflecting on an overall lack of knowledge on how territorial cohesion processes can be achieved via the implementation of public policies, one of the main arguments for the publication of this book is the examination and presentation of concrete policy arenas which can contribute to more balanced and cohesive territories. By considering a multi-dimensional approach, this book provides a more comprehensive and holistic approach to analysing territorial cohesion, as well as the nature of challenges and identification of potential policy strategies to achieve more balanced and cohesive territories. With this approach, this book is intended to be the first to comprehensively discuss the contribution of public policies to territorial cohesion. In sum, the main objectives of this book are to:

- Provide a comprehensive theoretical and practical discussion of how public policies can contribute to territorial cohesion trends and processes in a given territory;
- Provide key messages to academics and policymakers on how to implement public policies to achieve territorial cohesion trends and processes in a given territory;
- Provide a key bibliography resource for students in several university courses covering various academic domains like European policies, regional, urban, and border studies, governance, social inclusion, environmental sustainability, spatial planning, geography, economy, policy evaluation, etc.;
- Identify and discuss key policy areas critical to promoting territorial cohesion policy strategies;
- Address the importance of social, economic, environmental, governance, cooperation, and spatial planning process in achieving territorial cohesion trends and processes in a given territory.
- As can be seen, the chapters are written by some of the most renowned experts on the book's main theme, including scholars from several European countries, as well as the EU officials and secretary generals of EU entities. The goal here is to combine theoretical perspective with more practical experiences from policymakers and practitioners at the EU level. Crucially, this text will thoroughly prepare students and provide knowledge to academics and policymakers in the fields of territorial cohesion, which is still a quite misunderstood concept, globally speaking. Indeed, despite the publication of some articles and a few books on

territorial cohesion processes, there is a clear lack of appropriate literature aimed at understanding how public policies can foster territorial cohesion trends at all spatial levels.

Lisboa, Portugal

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Part I
EU and National Public Policies for Territorial Cohesion

Chapter 1
EU Policies and Strategies and Territorial Cohesion

Eduardo Medeiros and Sérgio Caramelo

Abstract Territorial cohesion is an EU concept and, in recent decades, several EU policies, such as the EU Cohesion Policy, have contributed decisively to promoting territorial development in socioeconomically lagging EU regions. It resembles a European political ideal that collectively we try to achieve, but without knowing very well what it is. However, as several studies have concluded, although at the EU level certain territorial cohesion trends have been attained in some policy arenas, at the national level there is no clear evidence that EU policies have contributed to achieving territorial cohesion trends in recent decades in EU member states. In this context, this chapter critically discusses the evolution of EU policies and strategies to promote territorial cohesion in the EU territory since the implementation of the EU Cohesion Policy (1989). Crucially, it presents a critical overview of policy rationales presented by EU development agendas (e.g. Lisbon, Europe 2020, etc.), the European Spatial Development Perspective, the Green Paper for Territorial Cohesion, as well as the three EU territorial agendas. It concludes that territorial cohesion has never been at the core of EU mainstream development agendas and that the territorial agendas have not yet contributed to inverting this panorama. It also concludes that EU Cohesion Policy, with the exception of the current programming period (2021–27) has never included all the crucial dimensions of territorial cohesion in its main strategic objectives: socioeconomic cohesion + environmental sustainability + territorial cooperation/governance + morphologic polycentricity.

Keywords Territorial cohesion · EU cohesion policy · Territorial agendas · EU development agendas · Territorial development

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1.1 Introduction

It is widely acknowledged that territorial cohesion is mainly a European Union (EU) concept, and is still fuzzy and vague (Dao et al. 2017; Medeiros 2016b). This EU policy concept took central stage, in a formal manner, in the EU Amsterdam treaty (Servillo 2010). However, its meaning and policy relevance have since remained largely contested (González et al. 2015) and subject to systematic negotiations (Van Well 2012). On a positive note, territorial cohesion has triggered a novel dimension in EU policy debates (Davoudi 2005), and contributed to stimulating a wealth of literature on the relevance of the territorial dimension of policies (Medeiros 2017a). It has also given rise to a more comprehensive impact assessment method to be used by EU entities, named territorial impact assessment (TIA) (Medeiros 2020d). Moreover, as Schön (2005) and Abrahams (2014) claim, territorial cohesion has become a new buzzword for a European spatial planning strategy, largely focused on a polycentric urban network rationale, and as a counterbalance of the policy-centred growth and competitiveness rationale (Vanolo 2010). On the other hand, to invoke Faludi (2007), territorial cohesion has also contributed to reinforcing the notion of a European model of society in concrete policy areas on various territorial scales.

It is under this dual policy and scientific background that this chapter proposes to present an overall overview of the relevance of territorial cohesion for mainstream EU policy development strategies. Firstly, territorial cohesion is now both a formal and relatively invoked EU policy goal and is still somewhat debated and analysed by several scholars, both in terms of its conceptual meaning and, in lesser measure, presenting methods to measure its trends in a given territory. Secondly, so far, territorial cohesion has never truly taken centre stage in EU development strategies and the main goals of EU Cohesion Policy. Likewise, in the academic domain, territorial cohesion studies and analysis have never attracted the attention of the academic community in comparison to regional and urban development and planning studies, and especially economic growth-related analysis.

In this context, the research fundamental question of this chapter is: “How far is territorial cohesion considered in EU mainstream development strategies as a key EU public policy?” As regards public policies, a wealth of literature advances that public policies fail if they do not reach their main goals and expected target groups (Huencho 2022). In addition, the whole life cycle of public policy, with possible feedbacks between different territorial levels, should be considered in this analysis (Saurugger and Radaelli 2008). Mainstream literature on public policies recognises the importance of leadership and institutional environment (Cardoza et al. 2015), administrative capacity (Lindstrom 2021; Medeiros and Potluka 2021), and socioeconomic status (Shao et al. 2021), amongst other contexts, which determine the degree of their successful implementation. In this chapter, however, the methodological approach draws mostly on desk research and on available scientific literature, as well as the reading of official EU documents. The three following sections organise the research. The next discusses the relation and contribution of EU strategic development agendas to the EU policy goal of territorial cohesion. The third section elaborates on the strategies of EU Cohesion Policy frameworks to effectively (or not) promote territorial cohesion policies at the EU and national levels. The subsequent chapter highlights the role of the three EU territorial agendas to implement territorial cohesion policies. Finally, the last section concludes the analysis.

1.2 EU Strategic Development Agendas and Territorial Cohesion

The European integration project started in 1957 with a strong economic and market liberalisation rationale. However, the Treaty of Rome, signed in the same year, already recognised the need for a harmonious development of economic activities, which can be regarded as a starting point for a EU territorial cohesion policy goal (Colomb and Santinha 2014). Indeed, as a policy and political concept, territorial cohesion has been in the EU policy agenda for many decades and has gained prominence since the 1990s as a set of principles for a more balanced, harmonious, sustainable and efficient territorial development of the EU (Clifton et al. 2016). This basic policy rationale has evolved gradually in EU documents, and the academic discourse, as Zaucha and Böhme (2020) uphold, in which notions and policy goals such as territorial governance, territorial cooperation, territorial integration, spatial planning, territorial resiliency, and territorial sustainability are associated with territorial cohesion policies.

It is crucial to point out, however, that the notion of territorial cohesion only appeared in EU documents in 2001, in the Second Cohesion Report (EC 2001a), and later on the Third Cohesion Report (EC 2004). This was largely influenced by the previous publication of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) (EC 1999), which invoked the need for an harmonious and balanced development of the Union as a whole (Janin Rivolin 2005), and by the French "*Aménagement du territoire*" spatial planning approach (Faludi 2004).

In formal terms, however, the policy goal of territorial cohesion was only included in a key EU policy goal in the Treaty of Lisbon, which was signed in 2007 and entered into force in 2009 (Colomb and Santinha 2014). In the meantime (2008), the only EU key document on territorial cohesion was published as the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion (EC 2008a), amid overall EU member states' intention to stimulate discussion, with the hope of some form of consensus emerging (Faludi 2013). But as Chamusca et al. (2022) conclude, many references to the territorial dimension of EU policies are commonly mentioned in several European documents, before and after the publication of the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion. Even so, in normative terms, this paper embraces several policy areas which are seen to be critical in materialising territorial cohesion processes, including concentration, connectivity and cooperation policy goals (EC 2008a).

While the Lisbon and Gothenburg Agendas clearly neglected the territorial dimension of EU policies, for Chamusca et al. (2022), 10 years later (2010), the Europe 2020 strategy end up reinforcing the territorial cohesion dimension of EU policies. It incorporated the notion of territorial cohesion in its text, as well as a functional and multi-level governance and a place-based approach for implementing EU policies. In tandem, the same authors claim that the EU Agenda 2030, adopted in late 2020, recognises the need to foster an EU territorial cohesion action-oriented framework via a place-based approach.

Table 1.1 presents a summary of the relation between the post-2000 EU mainstream strategic development agendas and their relationship with territorial cohesion crucial components. Starting with the EU Lindon Strategy, which was launched in March 2000 with the main goal of making Europe the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion (EP 2010), it is immediately evident that it follows a socioeconomic-centric vision of development for the EU, with no mention of sustainably based and balance-based development approaches. In view of this, in the following year (2001) the EU Gothenburg Strategy complemented the Lisbon Strategy policy goals by highlighting the need for a sustainable development approach, since "economic growth, social cohesion and environmental protection must go hand in hand" (EC 2001b: 2). As seen, some key territorial cohesion policy domains such as territorial governance, polycentrism and territorial cooperation (see Medeiros 2016b) were not highlighted as paramount development arenas in these strategies.

In 2005, a revised Lisbon Strategy was released with a new set of integrated guidelines and specific areas for priority actions, which continue to be supported by the mainstream development triad, economy + society + environment, although with an increased focus on growth and jobs via a 3-year policy cycle (EC 2005). In 2010, a 10-year EU strategy named Europe 2020 replaced the Lisbon Strategy. Then again, the economic centric growth policy rationale guided its main goals. Curiously, the goal of territorial cohesion appeared in these goals for the first time but was linked to the goal of "inclusive growth" to ensure that "the benefits of growth and jobs are widely shared and people experiencing poverty and social exclusion are enabled to live in dignity and take an active part in society" (EC 2010a, b: 4). Further on, this strategy reveals that "it is also essential that the benefits of economic growth spread to all parts of the Union, including its outermost regions, thus strengthening territorial cohesion" (EC 2010a, b: 20). It is not surprising that territorial cohesion is included in this strategy since it was included in the Lisbon Treaty in 2009 as a main EU policy goal, alongside economic and social cohesion. This justifies the Europe 2020 intention that "economic, social and territorial cohesion will remain at the heart of the Europe 2020 strategy to ensure that all energies and capacities are mobilised and focused on the pursuit of the strategy's priorities. Cohesion policy and its structural funds, while important in their own right, are key delivery mechanisms to achieve the priorities of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in member states and regions" (EC 2010a, b: 20). As seen, in general terms, territorial cohesion is viewed by the Europe 2020 strategy as a mere policy accessory to social inclusion,

Table 1.1 Mainstream EU development strategies/agendas since 2000

Strategy/agenda	Main goals	Related components of territorial cohesion
Lisbon—2000	1. Preparing the transition to a knowledge-based economy and society by better policies for the information society and R&D, as well as by stepping up the process of structural reform for competitiveness and innovation and by completing the internal market 2. Modernising the European social model, investing in people and combating social exclusion 3. Sustaining the healthy economic outlook and favourable growth prospects by applying an appropriate macro-economic policy mix	– Economic competitiveness – Social cohesion
Gothenburg—2001	1, Economic growth 2. Social inclusion 3. Environmental protection	– Economic competitiveness – Social inclusion – Environmental sustainability
Lisbon revised—2005	1. Investing more in knowledge and innovation 2. Unlocking business potential, especially for SMEs 3. Increasing employment opportunities for priority categories 4. Climate change and energy policy for Europe	– Economic competitiveness – Social inclusion – Environmental sustainability
Europe 2020–2010	1. Smart growth: developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation 2. Sustainable growth: promoting a more resource efficient, greener and more competitive economy 3. Inclusive growth: fostering a high-employment economy delivering social and territorial cohesion	– Economic competitiveness – Social inclusion – Environmental sustainability
EC 2019–2024—2019	1. A European Green Deal 2. A Europe fit for the digital age 3. An economy that works for people 4. A stronger Europe in the world 5. Promoting our European way of life 6. A new push for European democracy	– Economic innovation – Social inclusion – Environmental sustainability – Democracy

and EU Cohesion Policy a critical policy tool to materialise this policy goal via the support to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. On a positive note, the delivery of a stronger governance process is invoked by the Europe 2020 strategy; however, no mention is made of the need for a more balanced, polycentric and harmonious territory, nor for the support for European territorial cooperation processes.

For the period 2019–2024, the EC proposed six main development priorities, topped by the European Green Deal, with the goal of transforming the EU into a modern, resource efficient and competitive economy by ensuring: (i) no net emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050; (ii) economic growth decoupled from resource use; and (iii) that no person and no place be left behind. This later component clearly has a character of territorial cohesion. However, this Green Deal does not make a single mention of the need to foster a more cohesive and balanced territory. Even so, it mentions that "the urban dimension of cohesion policy will be strengthened, and the proposed European Urban Initiative will provide assistance to cities to help them make best use of opportunities to develop sustainable urban development strategies" (EC 2019: 23).

1.3 EU Cohesion Policy and Territorial Cohesion

As the name indicates, EU Cohesion Policy was forged with the intention of promoting a more cohesive EU territory (Medeiros 2017b), and ultimately territorial cohesion trends (Molle 2007). Since territorial cohesion is a multi-dimensional concept (Garau et al. 2020; Medeiros 2017b), this goal can be achieved in a myriad of ways. For, Chamusca et al. (2022), for instance, EU Cohesion Policy has played a critical role in promoting more balanced territorial development and strengthening a culture of spatial planning.

In simple terms, EU Cohesion Policy is the main EU policy tool for achieving territorial cohesion trends, by means of its various funds: the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF), and the Cohesion Fund (CF) (see Rauhut and Costa 2021). Indeed, it has become commonplace to recognise EU Cohesion Policy as a cornerstone EU Policy for addressing territorial development in the EU, not only because of its financial package (representing a third of the EU budget), but also because it benefits all EU regions, one way or the other (Crescenzi and Giua 2020). Concerning the latter factor, the systematic enlargement process of the EU towards the east has increased territorial development imbalances and has placed more challenges to EU Cohesion Policy as the main instrument of addressing EU regional inequalities (Madanipour et al. 2021).

Despite the many metamorphoses suffered by EU Cohesion Policy over the past decades to adapt to new policy and development contexts (Medeiros 2014, 2017a, b, c), it is still deemed to act as a mechanism of redistribution and solidarity (Crescenzi et al. 2020). Clearly conceived from the outset as a distributive instrument to improve the economic performances of the less developed regions, Cohesion Policy allocation of funding has been aligned with economic indicators such as GDP per capita

(Vinci 2021). From a strategic design standpoint, however, several changes have been implemented over the several passing programming periods (Medeiros 2020c).

For instance, in the last programming period (2014–2020), increasing attention was given to integrated sustainable urban development by EU Cohesion Policy, not only because it embraces a green policy rationale, which is globally acknowledged as the only viable path for preserving the planet and our species (Sachs 2015), but also because of the increasing importance of urban areas in Europe and the world as engines of development and attractive places to live (UN 2020). Moreover, the policy integration rationale offers a range of more effective solutions for policy implementation, especially relevant in the context of urban development and planning policies (Medeiros and van der Zwet 2020a; b; Mendez et al. 2021).

Curiously, or not, Gagliardi and Percoco (2017: 856) reveal the importance of urban areas in translating positive development impacts of EU Cohesion Policy, as well as rural areas close to cities, which have "benefitted most from the growing opportunities created by the policy by accommodating the increasing demand for available space in the surroundings of main urban agglomerates". Likewise, Bachtrögler et al. (2020) conclude that these impacts tend to be larger in relatively poor countries, which can justify territorial cohesion trends at the EU level in past years (Medeiros 2016b). Conversely, others argue that territorial cohesion policies are often defined and shaped by the institutions involved (Faludi 2016), and are where the principle of subsidiarity is effectively implemented (Moodie et al. 2021).

In our view, however, for the current programming period (2021–2027), the proposed five policy objectives of EU Cohesion Policy (see Table 1.2) are, for the first time, closely aligned with the main dimensions of territorial cohesion (see Medeiros 2016b). Firstly, the goal towards a more competitive and smarter Europe is related to a dimension of economic competitiveness, which has always been present in all main objectives of EU Cohesion Policy programming periods. The support for social inclusiveness, as yet another critical dimension of territorial cohesion, is also present in the current and previous EU Cohesion Policy phases. What is new since the 2014–2020 programming period is the identification of specific main policy goals towards supporting environmental sustainability. Moreover, since 2007, European territorial cooperation has become a central EU Cohesion Policy goal, following three phases of the Interreg community initiative (Medeiros 2018a, b).

In almost every way, the 2014–2020 phase of EU Cohesion Policy also brought to the fore the need for investment in territorial governance-related components, like support for improved administrative capacity of public administration (Bachtler et al. 2014). Indeed, until 2006, the main policy goals of EU Cohesion Policy were concentrated on promoting socioeconomic cohesion in EU territories. It is true that several EU community initiatives (Table 1.3) with more targeted policy intervention goals like the Interreg community initiative (EC 1990) complemented this overarching EU policy goal in specific policy areas. Since 2021, however, a manifested separate priority of EU Cohesion Policy was directed towards promoting a more connected Europe, a policy goal which is clearly related to the morphologic polycentricity dimension of territorial cohesion. In sum, the evolution of all the main policy goals of EU Cohesion Policy in all its phases has evolved towards a more

Table 1.2 EU cohesion policy phases and main goals

Phase	Main goals	Related components of territorial cohesion
1989–1993	1. Promoting the development and structural adjustment of regions whose development is lagging behind 2. Converting regions seriously affected by an industrial decline 3. Combating long-term unemployment 4. Facilitating the occupational integration of young people 5. (a) Speeding up the adjustment of agricultural structures and (b) promoting the development of rural areas	– Economic competitiveness – Social inclusion
1994–1999	1. Promoting the development and structural adjustment of regions whose development is lagging behind 2. Converting regions or parts of regions seriously affected by industrial decline 3. Combating long-term unemploymentand facilitating the integration into working life of young people and of persons exposed to exclusion from the labour market, promotion of equal employment opportunities for men and women 4. Facilitating adaptation of workers to industrial changes and to changes in production systems 5. Promoting rural development by (a) speeding up the adjustment of agricultural structures in the framework of reform of common agricultural policy and promoting the modernisation and structural adjustment of the fisheries sector, (b) facilitating the development and structural adjustment of rural areas 6. Development and structural adjustment of regions with an extremely low population density (as of 1 January 1995)	– Economic competitiveness – Social inclusion
2000–2006	1. Promoting the development and structural adjustment of regions whose development is lagging behind 2. Supporting the economic and social conversion of areas facing structural difficulties, hereinafter; and 3. Objective 3: supporting the adaptation and modernisation of policies and systems of education, training and employment	– Economic competitiveness – Social inclusion

(continued)

Table 1.2 (continued)

Phase	Main goals	Related components of territorial cohesion
2007–2013	1. Convergence: aims at speeding up the convergence of the least-developed Member States and regions defined by GDP per capital of less than 75% of the EU average; 2. Regional Competitiveness and Employment: covers all other EU regions with the aim of strengthening regions' competitiveness and attractiveness as well as employment; and 3. European Territorial Cooperation: based on the Interreg initiative, support is available for cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation as well as for networks	– Economic competitiveness – Social inclusion – Territorial Cooperation
2014–2020	1. Strengthening research, technological development and innovation; 2. Enhancing access to, and use and quality of, information and communication technologies 3. Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs 4. Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy 5. Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management 6. Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency; 7. Promoting sustainable transport and improving network infrastructures 8. Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility 9. Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination 10. Investing in education, training, and lifelong learning 11. Improving the efficiency of public administration	– Economic competitiveness – Social inclusion – Territorial Cooperation – Territorial Governance – Environmental Sustainability – Territorial Integration
2021–2027	1. A more competitive and smarter Europe 2. A greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy 3. A more connected Europe by enhancing mobility 4. A more social and inclusive Europe 5. A Europe closer to citizens by fostering the sustainable and integrated development of all types of territories	– Economic competitiveness – Social inclusion – Territorial Cooperation – Territorial Governance – Environmental Sustainability – Territorial Integration – Territorial Connectivity

Source Own elaboration based on: (EC 1996, 2007, 2008b, 2010a, b, 2014, 2017, 2022) comprehensive set of policy objectives covering all the main conceptual dimensions of territorial cohesion from a policy strategy standpoint. This is, in our view, a positive sign in which the realization that supports for socioeconomic and environmental sustainability projects needs to be complemented with territorial governance and cooperation related projects, as well as with increasing territorial connectivity and integration. Ultimately, the "territorialicy" (Medeiros 2020b) character of EU Cohesion Policy has increased with each phase, thus building momentum for an increased contribution to a more cohesive EU territory, at least from a policy strategy standpoint.

1.4 EU Territorial Agendas and Territorial Cohesion

The EU territorial agendas result, in our view, from the realisation that EU mainstream development strategies largely neglected the territorial dimension of EU policies (see Medeiros 2016a; 2017a; 2020a). Here, for instance, the Lisbon and Gothenburg Agendas were respectively focused on socioeconomic and sustainability agendas (Colomb and Santinha 2014), with no particular regard for a territorial cohesion rationale or even a policy vision for territorialicy (Medeiros 2020b). In this context, the introduction of the first territorial agenda in 2007 (TA 2007) was considered a crucial step in consolidating territorial cohesion as a key policy goal and, according to Nosek (2017), it highlighted the important role of spatial planning and sustainability in implementing EU policies. Crucially, despite all the EU strategic attempts to translate territorial cohesion into policy actions (Demeterova et al. 2020) or coherent policy packages, taking account of where policies take effect (Faludi 2013) towards more balanced and harmonious territory territorial cohesion trends at the national level, have not yet been achieved in all analysed member states (Medeiros and Rauhut 2020).

This first territorial agenda was profoundly preconditioned and influenced by the previously mentioned ESDP (Monzon et al. 2019), which reflects a polycentric development rationale, as well as the support for transnational spatial development strategies for the European territory (Faludi 2006). For Asprogerakas and Zachari (2020: 583), this polycentrism-centred rationale of the ESDP reveals the "role and importance of the urban poles and their connection in order to bring spatial development, irrespective of the size of the relevant spatial geographical entity".

Instead, the second territorial agenda was revealed 1 year after the adoption of the Europe 2020 strategy, to put "forward an ambitious strategy, though specifically attributed to EU territorial development" (Zaucha et al. 2014: 250), since "the objectives of the EU defined in the "Europe 2020" Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth can only be achieved if the territorial dimension of the strategy is taken into account, as the development opportunities of the different regions vary" (TA 2011: 3). Another pressing policy goal advanced during the negotiations of the second TA was the need to increase the coordination of EU policies to achieve greater

Table 1.3 Community initiatives for the period 1989–1993

Name	Goal	Million Euros
INTERREG 1990–1993	Promoting the cooperation amongst border regions and revitalising those areas located at the furthest borders of the Community	800
NOW 1990–1993	Focusing on women who should take advantage of the equal opportunities in the field of employment and vocational training	120
HORIZON 1990–1993	Promoting the economic, professional and social integration of the disabled people and certain underprivileged groups	180
LEADER 1991–1993	Promoting the implementation of innovative solutions for the rural development	400
STRIDE 1990–1993	Strengthening the innovative capacity and the technological development	400
RECHAR 1989–1993	Diversifying the economic activities of the coalfields, promoting the creation of new activities, the development of those already existing, the improvement of the environment and the support to the vocational training	300
ENVIREG 1990–1993	Promoting the improvement of the environment and the economic development of the less developed regions	500
KONVER 1993	Promoting the economic diversification of those regions depending on the defence sector	130
REGIS 1990–1993	Intensifying the PCs in favour of the ultra-peripheral regions to promote the adaptation of their economy to the Single Market	200
RETEX 1992–1993	Economic diversification of the areas depending on the textile sector and the dress–making	100
PRISMA 1991–1993	Helping the companies of the less privileged areas to take advantage of the creation of the single market through the improvement of certain infrastructures and services	100
REGEN 1990–1993	Facilitating the piping of natural gas and electricity in the less developed regions	300
TELEMÁTICA 1990–1993	Promoting the use of advanced telecommunication services in the less favoured regions	200
EUROFORM 1990–1993	Developing new qualifications, skills and employment opportunities to promote their convergence on a community scale	300

Source own elaboration based on European Commission

policy coherence as well as the requirement to improve analysis and territorial-data collection for evidence-based policy-making (Van Well 2012).

By late 2019, the third territorial agenda was approved (TA 2019), with a view to providing orientation for strategic spatial planning and the strengthening of the territorial dimension of sector policies at all governance levels. With the aim of providing an action-oriented framework to promote territorial cohesion in Europe

(TA 2019) this renewed territorial agenda seeks an inclusive and sustainable future for all European places and the achievements of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN 2016) in Europe. In essence, the Territorial Agenda 2030 is supported by two main policy goals: (i) a just Europe that offers future perspectives for all places and people via better-balanced territorial development utilising Europe's diversity + a convergent local and regional development, less inequality between places + easier living and working across national borders; and (ii) a green Europe that protects common livelihoods and shapes societal transition via better ecological livelihoods, climate-neutral and resilient towns, cities and regions + strong and sustainable local economies in a globalised world + sustainable digital and physical connectivity of places.

As can be seen in Table 1.4, the first territorial agenda was strongly influenced by the ESDP in placing the goal of promoting a polycentric territory of the EU at the heart of its agenda. Instead, the following territorial agendas soon gave rise to the broader policy goal of territorial cohesion as their main strategic policy priority goal. Certainly, all the three territorial agendas advance concrete policy measures for promoting territorial cohesion trends in Europe, thus complementing ongoing EU mainstream territorial development strategies. What is striking is the attempt to simplify the policy message in the current (2030) territorial agenda by defining two main clear goals, with a social and environmental character (TA 2019). This was mostly due to the recognition that the message from the previous territorial agendas had a hard time being passed to policymakers all around Europe, probably due to the excessive and confusing number of policy messages. Despite this simplification, in our opinion, the Territorial Agenda 2030 is able to focus on crucial policy domains towards a more cohesive Europe, including the need to reinforce functional regions, territorial integration and connectivity at various territorial levels, and environmental sustainability via a circular economy.

1.5 Conclusion

Territorial cohesion is essentially an EU policy goal that was formalised in the EU Treaty in 2009. However, as seen in the analysis presented, the analysed (post-2000) EU mainstream strategic development agendas have always retained the prevailing vision of global development centred on the need to foster economic competitiveness and social inclusion, often complemented with the need to support policy actions related to environmental sustainability. Hence, it is not difficult to conclude that, in overall terms, the EU has never truly adopted a vision of territorial cohesion for its development agendas. Even in the current (2019–2024) EU development vision, territorial cohesion is not given a specific strategy package alike the EU Green Deal, which specifically targets the domain of environmental sustainability.

The lack of strong and effective engagement from the EU in promoting a vision of territorial cohesion development has prompted a range of initiatives to counterbalance the EU prevailing policy focus on socioeconomic + environmental policy actions.

Table 1.4 Territorial agendas strategic rationale and territorial cohesion

	TA (2007)	TA (2011)	TA (2030)
Main theme	– Towards a more **competitive** and **sustainable** Europe of diverse regions	– Towards an **inclusive**, **smart** and **sustainable** Europe of diverse regions	– A future for **all places**
Main goal	– Promote a **polycentric territory** of the EU	– Support **territorial cohesion** in Europe	– Promote **territorial cohesion** in Europe
Territorial cohesion rationale	– Promote **polycentric** development – Secure better living conditions and **quality of life** – Promote **territorial governance**	– Better integrate territorial cohesion into **cohesion policy** – Promote a **place-based approach** – Promote **integrated functional are**a development – Promote a **multi-level governance** approach – Promote **sustainable** and efficient use of **territory** and resources	– Promoting **balanced and harmonious territorial development** between and within countries, regions, cities and municipalities – Ensuring a **future for all places** and people in Europe, building on the diversity of places and **subsidiarity** – Promote an **inclusive and sustainable future** for all places
Priorities for territorial development and cohesion	1. Strengthen **polycentric** development and innovation through networking of city regions and cities 2. New forms of partnership and **territorial governance** between rural and urban areas 3. Promote **regional clusters** of competition and innovation in Europe 4. Strengthening and extension of **trans-European networks** 5. Promote trans-European **risk management** 6. Strengthening **ecological** structures and **cultural** resources	1. Promote **polycentric** and balanced territorial development 2. Encouraging **integrated development** in cities, rural and specific regions 3. Territorial integration in cross-border and transnational **functional regions** 4. Ensuring global competitiveness of the regions based on **strong local economies** 5. Improving **territorial connectivity** for individuals, communities and enterprises 6. Managing and connecting **ecological**, landscape and **cultural** values of regions	1. Promote a **Just Europe**: Balanced Europe- Functional Regions; and Integration beyond Borders 2. A **Green Europe**: Healthy Environment; Circular Economy; and Sustainable Connections

Source Own elaboration based on: (Medeiros 2019; TA 2007, 2011, 2019)

One of the most visible initiatives to elevate the importance of territorial cohesion as EU mainstream public policy was the publication of the three territorial agendas, all of them clearly addressing the need to promote a more polycentric, balanced, harmonious, integrated and cohesive EU territory, as a strategic development policy backbone. It is still debatable how successful the current (TA 2030) territorial agenda will be in permeating national and EU discourses and policy strategy lenses based on a territorial cohesion development rationale. What looks crystal clear is the relative failure in this attempt from the first two territorial agendas, at least in a more practical manner.

Another useful starting point in this debate is to invoke the importance of EU Cohesion Policy, which is the most financed EU policy, as a crucial and practical public policy instrument to foster territorial cohesion processes. However, a closer look at its main policy objectives over its six programming periods leads us to conclude that, from a strategic standpoint, this policy has, for the most part, supported projects aiming at promoting socioeconomic cohesion and environmental sustainability. Even so, EU Cohesion Policy was crucial to ignite and robust territorial cooperation (mostly cross-border and transnational) processes, and more recently territorial governance processes (mostly administrative capacity related projects). Moreover, many EU member states have used EU Cohesion Policy to modernise territorial connectivity-related infrastructures, thus contributing support for some components of the morphologic polycentrism dimension of territorial cohesion, if one understands this concept as: "the process of promoting a more cohesive and balanced territory, by: (i) supporting the reduction of socioeconomic territorial imbalances; (ii) promoting environmental sustainability; (iii) reinforcing and improving the territorial cooperation/governance processes; and (iv) reinforcing and establishing a more polycentric urban system" (Medeiros 2016b: 10).

In conclusion, despite being formally expressed in the EU Treaty as a key EU policy goal, territorial cohesion has left a strong imprint on EU mainstream development agendas. Also, the exact ramification and influence of EU Cohesion Policy in promoting a more balanced and cohesive EU territory can be verified in certain policy areas at the EU level, but not at the national level, where territorial exclusion trends continue to prevail in several analysed EU member states (Medeiros and Rauhut 2020). How far can the current territorial agenda (2030) contribute to shifting EU and national public policies towards the implementation of territorial cohesion policies is debatable and subject to further analysis. On a positive note, the current EU Cohesion Policy programming period is, more than ever, strategically aligned with a strategic vision of territorial cohesion, which includes the intention to support critical components of territorial cohesion public policies, like territorial connectivity and integration, as well as territorial cooperation, governance and the mainstream development triad: economic competitiveness, social inclusion and environmental sustainability. Then again, only a few years from now can evidence be provided of whether this more comprehensive and holistic strategic vision for EU Cohesion Policy was effectively translated into a more cohesive EU territory at various territorial levels.

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Chapter 2
National Policies and Territorial Cohesion

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Abstract Since March 2020, the European Union has launched a wide range of initiatives to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic, mainly through two complementary channels "through creating a new set of initiatives aimed specifically at resolving and or mitigating the effects of the pandemic in terms of public health, but also the resulting economic and social effects [and] by mobilizing a set of policies and public policy instruments to combat the effects of the pandemic, with the purpose of allocating resources to the new needs of the European economy and society" (Neto in Europa XXI J Regional Sci Territorial Policies 38:33–50, 2020). The main objectives of this chapter are: (i) to analyse the extent to which the new European rationale of policies to respond to the economic and social impacts of the pandemic, and in particular the European Recovery and Resilience Facility, enabled the emergence of a new generation of strategies and national public policies, which, within the framework

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of the great principles of the European Union that guide recovery, seek to provide specific answers to the way in which each member state was affected by the pandemic and how it conceives its recovery process; (ii) Carry out a comparative analysis of the intervention rationales of the Recovery and Resilience Plans (RRP) of a set of Member States; (iii) Evaluate how each of these RRPs establishes and/or foresees, or not, some model of articulation with the respective Partnership Agreements 2014–2020 and 2021–2027 of the Cohesion Policy; (iv) Analyse to what extent each RRP assumes or determines, or not, a territorialisation of its intervention.

Keywords European recovery and resilience facility · EU cohesion policy · COVID-19 pandemic · National policies · Territorial dimension

2.1 Introduction

Among the new European Union (EU) initiatives created specifically to deal with the pandemic, the following stand out: (i) The EU Recovery Plan for Europe; (ii) The SURE/ESM Pandemic Crisis Support/European Investment Bank (EIB) Guarantee Fund for Workers and Businesses; (iii) The Next Generation EU policy instrument; (iv) The Re-open EU initiative; (v) The European roadmap to lifting coronavirus containment measures; (vi) The initiative EUvsVirus Challenge; (vii) The European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience, and (viii) Temporary State Aid rules.

Concerning the Recovery Plan for Europe, the EU argues that “the COVID-19 crisis as well as the previous economic and financial crisis have shown developing sound, sustainable and resilient economies as well as financial and welfare systems built on strong economic and social structures helps Member States respond more effectively and in a fair and even way to shocks and recover more swiftly from them” (European Union 2021: 18).

From this perspective, the EU created the European Recovery and Resilience Facility (Regulation 2021/241, of 12 February 2021) precisely with the objective “to provide Member States with financial support with a view to achieving the milestones and targets of reforms and investments as set out in their recovery and resilience plans. That specific objective shall be pursued in close and transparent cooperation with the concerned Member States” (European Union 2021: 31).

The scope of application of the Facility “shall refer to policy areas of European relevance structured in six pillars: (i) Green transition; (ii) Digital transformation; (iii) Smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, including economic cohesion, jobs, productivity, competitiveness, research, development and innovation, and a well–functioning internal market with strong SMEs; (iv) Social and territorial cohesion; (v) Health, and economic, social and institutional resilience, with the aim of, inter alia, increasing crisis preparedness and crisis response capacity; and (vi) Policies for the next generation, children and the youth, such as education and skills” (European Union 2021: 31).

According to the European Commission's *Guidance to Member States Recovery and Resilience Plans* "the recovery and resilience plans need to reflect a substantive reform and investment effort. Both reforms and investments must be coherent and adequately address the challenges in the individual Member State. The reform efforts and investment put forward must be substantial and credible" (European Commission 2021: 3).

The analysis carried out in this chapter focuses precisely on this EU Recovery and Resilience Facility, and the main purposes of the paper are: (i) to analyse the extent to which the new European rationale of policies to respond to the economic and social impacts of the pandemic, and in particular the European Recovery and Resilience Facility (ERRF), enabled the emergence of a new generation of strategies and national public policies, which, within the framework of the great principles of the European Union that guide recovery, seek to provide specific answers to the way in which each member state was affected by the pandemic and how it conceives its recovery process; (ii) Carry out a comparative analysis of the intervention rationales of the Recovery and Resilience Plans (RRP) in different Member States; (iii) Evaluate how each of these RRPs establishes and/or foresees, or not, some model of articulation with the respective Partnership Agreements 2014–2020 and 2021–2027 of the Cohesion Policy (CP); (iv) Analyse to what extent each RRP assumes or determines, or not, a territorialization of its intervention.

This chapter is part of a broader research project entitled *Recovery Monitoring—Proposal for a conceptual model and methodology for monitoring Portugal's economic and social recovery in a COVID-19 and post-pandemic context*, which was developed in the UMPP—Public Policy Monitoring Unit of the University of Évora, Portugal. The project was financed by the Technical Assistance Program (POAT 2020) (POAT-01-6177-FEDER-000049) of the Portuguese Partnership Agreement, PORTUGAL 2020.

2.1.1 Theoretical Framework and Policy Setting Rationale

The COVID-19 lockdown measures "have led to sharp contractions in economic output, household spending, corporate investment and international trade" (Anderson et al. 2020: 2). Therefore, the economic response to COVID-19 was developed in three phases, as follows (Anderson et al. 2020: 2–3): (i) Phase 1 measures were meant to temporarily freeze economies as they were before the crisis, to shield healthy businesses from bankruptcy and to protect European firms from hostile takeovers by foreign state-backed enterprises; (ii) Phase 2 was about solvency support. As the lockdowns continued, firms had to take on increasing amounts of debt and draw on equity reserves to meet their working capital and investment needs. At the same time, credit standards were tightening. For increasingly leveraged firms, bankruptcy loomed; solvency support through direct recapitalization was needed; (iii) Phase 3 is about recovering from the severe contraction phase resulting from the switching on-and-off of lockdown measures.

The ERRF "aims to redirect the economy, not to use the stimulus to just restart the economy based on the existing industrial structure. It aims for a new more digital, cleaner, more circular, more just structure aligned with the climate objectives. This is not what a normal stimulus package usually does, but these are the core objectives of ERRF. It is also the reason for the 'resilience' in the name" (Núñez Ferrer 2021: 3).

In this sense, Núñez Ferrer (2021: 3–6) argues that the key risks facing the implementation of ERRF and the Member States' national RRPs which derive from it are as follows: (i) The multiplicity of targets can weaken the impact; (ii) Sustaining imbalances in the economy through subsidies; (iii) Delays in starting the recovery programme; (iv) Lack of European dimension in an integrated economy; (v) Capacity to run a successful recovery plan.

Therefore, Núñez Ferrer proposes the following solutions to mitigate the risks to successful implementation (Núñez Ferrer 2021: 7–10): (i) National reforms are a pillar to recovery; (ii) EU reforms to improve the effectiveness and speed of implementation; (iii) Active and useful labour market policies; (iv) Enhancing and improving the use of public–private partnerships. The *Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility*[1] determines, with regard to the implementation framework of the ERRF, its commitment and contribution to a range of reforms and investments addressing existing policy gaps and challenges "under six policy areas: (i) Green transition; (ii) Digital transformation; (iii) Economic cohesion, productivity and competitiveness; social and territorial cohesion; (iv) Health, economic, social and institutional resilience; (v) Policies for the next generation".[2]

Given the nature of the areas of reforms and investments planned for ERRF, it was to be expected that a model and rationale of functional articulation with the Cohesion Policy (CP) 2014–2020 and the CP 2021–2027 would be foreseen in this regard. Consequently, at the level of each EU Member State, there must be articulation between the respective RRPs and the Partnership Agreements 2014–2020, as well as providing for this articulation with the Partnership Agreements 2021–2027.

2.1.2 The Exercise of Compatibility Between Public Policy Instruments Arising from the Recovery and Resilience Facility and from Cohesion Policy 2021–2027

The EU has launched a wide range of initiatives to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic, mainly through two complementary channels - "through creating a new set of initiatives aimed specifically at resolving and or mitigating the effects of the pandemic in terms of public health, but also the resulting economic and social effects [and] by mobilizing a set of policies and public policy instruments to combat the effects of the pandemic, with the purpose of allocating resources to the new needs of the European economy and society" (Neto 2020: 39).

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[1] COM (2022) 75 final.

[2] COM (2022) 75 final, p. 49.

Although the ERRF and the CP are different European policy instruments, the fact that their implementation coincides in time and that there are coinciding or strongly correlated objectives and thematic areas of intervention would justify the creation of functional and strategic articulation mechanisms between these policy instruments.

This concerns both the European regulatory framework that governs them and the need for this articulation to be ensured, at the level of each Member State, in the processes of designing and implementing the respective RRP and CP Partnership Agreements. Table 2.1 presents a comparative analysis of the ERRF and the CP, with regard to their rationale for intervention, objectives, and the nature of their respective approaches.

Table 2.1 EU recovery and resilience facility and EU cohesion policy 2021–2027

EU recovery and resilience facility	EU cohesion policy 2021–2027
Institutional framework: European Commission and European Investment Bank	Institutional framework: European Commission
Nature of the approach: Recovery and resilience	Nature of the approach: Cohesion and convergence
Scope and scale: National	Scope and scale: National, regional, local, inter-regional, inter-local, cross-border, transnational, etc
Territorial targeting: No	Territorial targeting: Yes
Nature of the projects to be supported: Mainly standard investment projects	Nature of the projects to be supported: Evolutionary in line with the Evolution of EU Cohesion Policy's policy cycle
Thematic and policy framework: Focus on recovery, resilience, digital transition and climate transition	Thematic and policy framework: Focus on a more competitive, smarter, greener, connected, social and inclusive Europe that is closer to citizens
Access conditions: Reforms	Access conditions: Conditionalities
Temporal nature: Temporary policy instrument	Temporal nature: Permanent and continuous policy
Timeline: 2021–2026	Timeline: 2021–2027
Main approach background of a territorial nature: European Investment Bank (EIB) Municipalities Survey (2019, 2020) and EIB Investment Survey (EIBIS) (2016… 2020), EIB Cohesion Orientation 2021–2027	Main approach background of a territorial nature: Cohesion reports and interim progress reports from 1996 onwards

Source Neto (2021)

2.1.3 The Recovery and Resilience Facility's Rationale and Intervention Model

The medium and long-term consequences of the COVID-19 crisis "will critically depend on how quickly Member States' economies and societies will recover from that crisis, which in turn depends on the available fiscal space of Member States to take measures to mitigate the social and economic impact of the crisis, and on the resilience of their economies and social structures. Sustainable and growth enhancing reforms and investments that address structural weaknesses of Member State economies, and that strengthen the resilience, increase productivity and lead to higher competitiveness of Member States, will therefore be essential to set those economies back on track and reduce inequalities and divergences in the Union" (European Union 2021: 18).[3]

The RRPs shall be "consistent with the relevant country-specific challenges and priorities identified in the context of the European Semester and those identified in the most recent Council recommendations on the economic policy of euro area. The RRP should be consistent also with the information included by Member States in the National Reforms Programmes under the European Semester" (European Parliament 2021, Annex 1).

The types of financing and the methods of implementation "should be chosen on the basis of their ability to achieve the specific objectives of the actions and to deliver results, taking into account, in particular, the costs of controls, the administrative burden and the expected risks of non-compliance. Non-repayable financial support under the Facility should take the form of a sui generis Union contribution to be determined on the basis of a maximum financial contribution calculated for each Member State and taking into account the estimated total costs of the RRPs, which should be paid based on the achievement of results by reference to milestones and targets of the RRPs" (European Union 2021: 20).

2.2 Recovery and Resilience Plans and National Policies

Corti et al. (2022) analysed a set of national RRPs (Italy, Germany, Spain, France, Portugal, Slovakia, Austria and Belgium), focused on assessing the investments and reforms included in the RRPs, and on the quality of the proposed strategies in reinforcing the economic structure and thus the resilience of the member state to future economic challenges. The analysis carried out is based precisely on studying the extent to which the economic and social characteristics of each of these Member States, as well as the way in which COVID-19 affected them, and the national recovery strategy defined by each of them, determined for each one, a specific national strategy, which was embodied in each RRP.

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[3] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021R0241&from=EN.

From a different perspective, this chapter seeks to analyse precisely to what extent the regulatory framework of the ERRF, which is much more flexible than the regulatory framework of the CP in terms of implementation procedures, selection of projects and initiatives to support and monitoring, made it possible to affirm national strategies for recovery and resilience, and consequently, to what extent RRPs also gain the status of a national strategy and policy for recovery and resilience.

The Member States and respective RRPs analysed in this chapter are Portugal, Greece, Italy, Spain, Germany, Denmark, Ireland and Sweden. The choice of these Member States for this study was due to the intention to analyse a group of countries from the south and north of the EU.

2.2.1 Main Policy Areas Covered by the RRPs

Table 2.2 analyses the main policy areas covered by the RRPs of the Member States.

Although the ERRF implementation reference is naturally present in the main policy areas discussed by each RRP, Table 2.2 clearly shows that each Member State has adopted very different strategies for recovery and resilience. These differences are even more evident in the analysis carried out in points 2.2.1.1 to 2.2.1.8 of this chapter.

Table 2.3 analyses the model chosen by each Member State, in the relationship and proportion ensured between Grants and Loans, with regard to financing the recovery and resilience strategy provided for in the respective RRP.

Member States' options are therefore also very different in terms of the role of grants and loans in financing their RRPs.

2.2.1.1 Portugal's Recovery and Resilience Plan[4]

Portugal's RRP is a national programme that will implement a set of 83 investments and 32 reforms. This set of measures is expected to allow Portugal to resume sustained economic growth, reinforcing the objective of convergence with Europe over the next decade. This instrument is to be used for structural transformation, laying the foundations of a solid economy. Such an ambitious transformation is only possible if the country complements the RRP funds with other European financing instruments such as the Agreement of Partnership 2021–2027 and, for example, React-EU initiative—a tool to strengthen the CP for the period 2014–20 to accelerate recovery from the crisis.[5] Portugal's RRP responds essentially to three spheres of intervention: resilience, green transition and digital transformation:

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[4] https://recuperarportugal.gov.pt/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/PRR.pdf.

[5] For further information, please see Portugal's PRR, p. 212, available at https://recuperarportugal.gov.pt/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/PRR.pdf.

Table 2.2 Main policy areas covered by the RRPs

EU member states	Main policy areas covered by the RRPs
Portugal	The Portuguese Plan is structured as follows: Resilience (National Health Service, Housing, Social Responses, Culture, Business capitalization and innovation, Qualifications and competencies, Infrastructure, Forests, Water management); Digital transformation (Businesses, Quality of Public Finances, Economic justice and business environment, Efficient public administration, Digital schools); Green transformation (Seas, industry decarbonization, sustainable bioeconomy, building energy efficiency, hydrogen and renewables, sustainable mobility)
Greece	The Greek plan is structured around four pillars: green, digital, employment, skills and social cohesion, and private investment and economic and institutional transformation
Italy	The Italian plan is structured around six areas: digitalisation, innovation, competitiveness and culture; green revolution and ecological transition; infrastructure for sustainable mobility; education and research; cohesion and inclusion; health
Spain	The Spanish plan is structured around four pillars: green transformation; digital transformation; social and territorial cohesion; and gender equality. It includes measures in sustainable mobility, energy efficiency in buildings, clean power, digital skills, digital connectivity, support for the industrial sector and SMEs, and social housing
Germany	The German plan is structured around six policy priorities. These include reform and investment measures relating to climate action and energy transition, digitalisation of the economy, infrastructure and education, social participation, strengthening a pandemic-resilient health system, modernizing public administration and reducing barriers to investment
Denmark	The Danish plan is structured around the three pillars of resilience, green and digital transformation. The Danish plan foresees significant investments in energy efficiency, green research and development, the reduction of Co_2 emissions within the agricultural sector, and digitalisation
Ireland	The Irish plan is structured around three priority areas: advancing the green transition; accelerating and expanding digital reforms and transformation; social and economic recovery and job creation. The plan proposes projects in all seven European flagship areas
Sweden	The Swedish plan is structured around five components: green recovery; education and transition into work; meeting demographic challenges; expansion of broadband and digitalisation of public administration; and investment for growth and housing. All the measures included in Sweden's recovery plan are measures that the Government has proposed in the central government budget for 2020 or 2021

Source Authors' own elaboration base on European Parliament IPOL|Economic Governance Support Unit, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2021/659657/IPOL_IDA(2021)659657_EN.pdf

Table 2.3 RRP amounts requested and financing model

Member states	Grants	Loans	Max grants	Max loans
Portugal	Max	2,7 Bn	13,9 Bn	14,2 Bn
Spain	Max	0	69,5 Bn	84,8 Bn
Greece	Max	Max	17,8 Bn	12,4 Bn
Italy	Max	Max	68,9 Bn	122,8 Bn
Germany	Max	0	25,6 BN	240,90 Bn
Denmark	Max	0	1,6 Bn	21,9 Bn
Ireland	Max	0	1,0 Bn	18,7 Bn
Sweden	3,2 Bn	0	3,3 Bn	33,2 Bn

Source Authors' own elaboration base on European Parliament IPOL|Economic Governance Support Unit, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2021/659657/IPOL_IDA(2021)659657_EN.pdf

(i) Resilience: Portugal aims to be better prepared for possible future crises. The Plan has a strong social dimension and is expected to strengthen the national Health Service, increase the supply of social housing and support social interventions amongst those with the greatest needs. Vocational education and R&D are also within the scope of this intervention. Components: C1-National Health Service; C2-Housing; C3-Social Responses; C4-Culture; C5-Capitalization and Social Innovation; C6-Qualifications and Competencies; C7-Infrastructure, C8-Forests, C9-Water management;

(ii) Climate Transition: This dimension is important due to Portugal's commitment to climate goals, such as achieving carbon neutrality by 2050. Understanding that decarbonization of the economy and society offers important opportunities, Portugal is trying to improve energy efficiency in buildings and public transport, such as the interventions in the Lisbon and Oporto underground/tram networks. Components: C10-Oceans; C11-Decarbonization of Industry; C12-Sustainable Bio economy; C13-Energy Efficiency in Buildings; C14-Hydrogen and Renewables; C15-Sustainable Mobility;

(iii) Digital Transition: Significant reforms and investments are planned in the areas of digitization of companies, the state and the provision of digital skills in education, health, culture and forest management. Components: C16-Companies 4.0; C17-Quality and Sustainability of Public Finances; C18-Economic Justice and Business Environment; C19-More Efficient Public Administration; C20-Digital Schools.

The plan is expected to have an impact of 1.5–2.4% on Portugal's GDP, create 50.000 jobs by 2026 and the spill-over effect from other RRPs will have an impact of 0.5% on GDP. Crucially, it goes without saying that, by supporting all the previously mentioned policy domains, it can provide a pro-active contribution to territorial cohesion processes (Medeiros and Rauhut 2020), in articulation with already on-going CP investments.

2.2.1.2 Greece's Recovery and Resilience Plan[6]

The Greek RRP consists of 106 investment measures and 68 reforms and aspires to lead the country's economy, institutions and society into a new era. This national plan is completely coherent with the objectives previously set out by the European Union and also with the European Climate Neutrality Strategy and UN Sustainable Development Goals. All efforts are welcome in this transformation process, so Greece was able to complement the RRF funds with previous programmes such as "Europe 2020 strategy" and the cohesion policy for the 2014–2021 programming period.[7] Greece has organized its own RRP around 4 pillars: Green Transition, Digital Transformation, Employment, skills and social cohesion and Private investments and transformation of the economy:

(i) Green Transition—This pillar aims to promote overall electric mobility, reform urban spaces and address water consumption and reusability. Components: 1.1-Power up; 1.2-Renovate; 1.3-Recharge and refuel; 1.4-Sustainable use of resources, climate resilience and environmental protection;
(ii) Digital Transformation—Greece's RRP aims to develop an action plan for the provision of "customer-centric" public administration services, and it will also help in the transition to 5G technology and in promoting digital transformation in SMEs. Components: 2.1-Connect; 2.2-Modernize; 2.3-Digitalization of business;
(iii) Employment, Skills and Social Cohesion—This pillar is expected to address the modernisation of the workforce's skills, reform labour market policies and promote gender equality in the country. Components: 3.1-Increasing job creation and participation in labour market; 3.2 - Education, vocational training and skills; 3.3-Improve resilience, accessibility and sustainability of healthcare; 3.4-Increase access to affective and inclusive social policies;
(iv) Private investments and transformation of the economy—With this pillar, Greece is trying to reform and simplify the business environment, attract business and support investment, as well as updating research centres all over the country. Components: 4.1-Making taxes more growth-friendly and improving tax administration and tax collection; 4.2-Modernize public administration, through speeding up the implementation of public investments, capacity building measures and fighting corruption; 4.3-Improve the efficiency of the justice system; 4.4-Strengthen the financial sector and capital markets; 4.5-Promote research and innovation; 4.6-Modernize and improve the resilience of key economic sectors; 4.7-Improve competitiveness and promote private investments and exports.

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[6] https://greece20.gov.gr/.
[7] Greece's RRP, p. 654.

2.2.1.3 Italy's Recovery and Resilience Plan[8]

Italy's plan consists of 132 investments to support green and digital transition and 58 reforms to address sustainable growth. The Plan includes 16 components and is structured around 6 areas of intervention ("Missions"), focusing on three horizontal priorities: digitalisation and innovation, ecological transition and social inclusion. It follows a holistic approach to achieve recovery and increase potential growth, while enhancing socio-economic and institutional resilience. The research team did not find any evidence of complementarity between the RRP and other cohesion policies (for example, cohesion policy for the 2014–2021 programming period), but the Italian government, alongside the European Union grants and funds, is allocating an additional 30 billion to the work plan for recovery, a tangible commitment to finance all projects. There is evidence of some kind of territorialization since we know that "The Plan allocates € 82 billion to the South out of a total of € 206 billion that can be distributed according to geographical criteria (i.e. 40%) and also provides for significant investments in young people and women)".[9]

Italy's RRP is structured on 6 missions:

(i) Mission 1—Digitalisation, innovation, competitiveness, culture and tourism. This mission aims to promote the country's digital transformation, supporting innovation in the production system, and investing in two key sectors for Italy, namely tourism and culture. Components: M1C1-Digitalisation, innovation and security; M1C2-Digitalisation, innovation and competitiveness of production; M1C3-Tourism and Culture 4.0;
(ii) Mission 2—Green revolution and ecological transition. This mission has the main goals of improving the sustainability and resilience of the economic system and ensuring a fair and inclusive environmental transition. Components: M2C1-Sustainable agriculture and circular economy; M2C2-Energetic transition and sustainable mobility; M2C3-Energetic efficiency and building requalification; M2C4-Water resources;
(iii) Mission 3—Infrastructure for Sustainable Mobility. Its primary objective is to develop a modern, sustainable transport infrastructure extended to all areas of the country. Components: M3C1-High speed train network and secure roads; M3C2-Intermodality and integrated logistics;
(iv) Mission 4—Education and Research. This mission aims to strengthen the education system, digital and technical-scientific skills, research and technology transfer. Components: M4C1-Strengthening education services from kindergartens to universities; M4C2-From research to business creation;
(v) Mission 5—Inclusion and Cohesion. This mission aims to facilitate labour market participation, through training, strengthening active labour market policies and fostering social inclusion. Components: M5C1-Labour policies; M5C2-Social infrastructure, communities and third sector;

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[8] https://www.governo.it/sites/governo.it/files/pnrr.pdf.

[9] https://www.mef.gov.it/en/focus/The-National-Recovery-and-Resilience-Plan-NRRP/.

(vi) Mission 6—Health. This mission aims to strengthen local prevention and health services, modernizing and digitizing the health system and ensuring equal access to care. Components: M6C1-Proximity networks, structures and telemedicine for territorial health care; M6C2-Research, Innovation and digitalization of national healthcare system.

The plan will have a 1.5–2.5% impact on GDP and is expected to create 24,000 jobs by 2026.

2.2.1.4 Spain's Recovery and Resilience Plan[10]

Spain's RRP is expected to respond to "the urgent need of fostering a strong recovery and making Spain future-ready". To do so, the plan incorporates an important agenda of 112 investments and 102 structural reforms which are interrelated and provide feedback to achieve its goals. Spain is also receiving a significant volume of resources from European's multiannual financial framework 2021–2027 in which we would highlight the European Social Fund, the European Regional Development Fund and the European Fund for Agriculture and Rural Development.[11] Spain also made an extra effort to include all territorial administrations, creating new mechanisms for territorialization of the plan.[12]

Spain's RRP addresses the six policy areas, but defines 4 transversal axes through which European funds are distributed: Ecological transition, digital transformation, social and territorial cohesion and gender equality:

(i) Lever Policy 1—Urban and Rural agenda, depopulation and agricultural development. Spain aims to reduce the inequalities between metropolitan and rural areas (cohesion). Components: C1-Shock plan for safe and connected mobility; C2-Housing redevelopment and urban regeneration; C3-Environmental and digital transformation of the agro-food and fisheries system;
(ii) Lever Policy 2—Resilient Infrastructure and Ecosystems. Infrastructure must have the capacity to attract large volumes of investment and there is an urgent need to develop nature-based solutions and reinforce climate adaptation. Components: C4-Conservation and restauration of biodiversity; C5-Preservation of coastline, water and resources; C6-Sustainable, safe and connected mobility;
(iii) Lever Policy 3—Inclusive and Fair climate transition. Spain urgently needs to develop a carbon-free energy system and take advantage of its renewable energy potential. Components: C7-Integration of renewable energies; C8-Electric infrastructure and promotion of smart grids; Renewable hydrogen roadmap; C10-Fair transition strategy;

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[10] https://ec.europa.eu/info/files/spains-recovery-and-resilience-plan_en.

[11] Spain's RRP, pages 186–196.

[12] Spain's RRP, page nº 196.

(iv) Lever Policy 4—Public Administration ready for the XXI century. It is not possible to implement real transformation if public administration is not digitally ready. Components: C11-Modernization of Public Administration;

(v) Lever Policy 5—Modernization and digitalization of industries, SMEs and Tourism recovery. Spain urgently needs to modernize the industry-services ecosystem. Components: C12-Industrial Policy 2030; C13-SMEs impulse; C14-Modernization and competitiveness plan for tourism; C15-Digital connectivity, cybersecurity and 5G deployment;

(vi) Lever Policy 6—Science and innovation pact, National Health system reforms. Spain cannot operate a transformation without a science-based approach, especially in such a strategic area as the national health system. Components: C16-AI national strategy; C17-National science and technological reforms; C18-Renewal and expansion of the National Health system capabilities;

(vii) Lever Policy 7—Education, Knowledge and continuous training. Spain needs to reinforce its human capital, preparing it for the upcoming challenges. Components: C19-National Plan for digital skills; C20-Strategical Plan for vocational training; C21-Modernization and digitalization of the educational system;

(viii) Lever Policy 8—New care economy and employment policies. Spain needs to improve the functionalities of the labour market and social wellbeing. Components: C22-Shock plan for care economy and reinforcement of inclusion policies; C23-New policies for a resilient and inclusive labour market;

(ix) Lever Policy 9—Industry, culture and sport. Although Spain has huge cultural richness, such as the Spanish language, it wants to support new initiatives provided by new technologies. Components: C24-Revaluation of the cultural industry, C25-Spain as a European hub for audio-visuals; C26-National plan to support the sports sector;

(x) Lever Policy 10—Tax system Modernization. Components: C27-Tax fraud prevention; C28-Modernization of tax system, suitable for the XXI century; C 29-Improving Effectiveness of Public Spending; C30-Long-term sustainability of the public pension system.

The plan is expected to help in job creation and in boosting the economy. The RRP will have a 1.8–2.5% impact on GDP and create 250,000 jobs by 2026. The spill-over effects from neighbouring economies will impact Spanish GDP by up to 0.4%.

2.2.1.5 Germany's Recovery and Resilience Plan[13]

Germany's national RRP will be supported by 25.6 billion euros in grants and involve 40 measures. Regarding climate and environmental policies, Germany needs to rapidly decarbonize its industry while reducing greenhouse gas emissions, specifically making the transport sector more sustainable. Digitally, Germany must invest in its digital infrastructure, reducing the gap with other EU countries that have better coverage of very high capacity networks.

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[13] https://www.bundesfinanzministerium.de/Content/DE/Standardartikel/Themen/Europa/DARP/deutscher-aufbau-und-resilienzplan.html.

Germany's RRP consists of 6 priorities, as follows:

(i) Priority 1—Climate Policy and Climate Transition. Germany is expected to expand hydrogen research and implement further measures towards ecological mobility. Components: 1.1-Decarbonisation; 1.2-Environmentally friendly mobility; 1.3-Ecological construction and buildings update;
(ii) Priority 2—Economy and Infrastructure Digitalisation. Germany is planning to spend more than 50% of this funding on this digitalisation process. Components: 2.1-Data as the raw material of the future; 2.2-Economy digitalisation;
(iii) Priority 3—Digitalisation of the education system. Education should explore the possibilities and potential of digitalisation, improving opportunities for all and promoting the future success of young people. Components: 3.1-Education digitalisation;
(iv) Priority 4—Strengthen social participation. Social Participation must be reinforced through the expansion of childcare infrastructure or action programmes to compensate for learning deficits caused by the pandemic;
(v) Priority 5—Strengthen the Social Health system so that it becomes more resilient. Public Health will be supported and federal government will also support the future hospital programme. The acceleration of research and development will also be considered under this priority. Components: 5.1-Strengthening a pandemic-resilient health system;
(vi) Priority 6—Public Administration modernisation and removal of investment barriers. Germany and its federal government are trying to remove all investment barriers through a modern, digital public administration. Components: 6.1-Modern Public Administration; 6.2-Removal of investment barriers.

The plan is expected to impact the German GDP positively by 0.4–0.7% and to create 135,000 jobs by 2026.

2.2.1.6 Denmark's Recovery and Resilience Plan[14]

The Danish plan involves 33 investments and 6 reforms. This plan will mainly address climate objectives, with 59% of funds, and the digital transition, with 25%. The plan is consistent with other national initiatives, and as seen in other examples, the funding provided by the RRF is complemented with other European funds such as the European Agriculture Guarantee Funds and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.

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[14] https://fm.dk/nyheder/nyhedsarkiv/2021/april/dansk-genopretningsplan-skal-understoette-den-groenne-omstilling.

The Danish RRP is built around the following 7 pillars:

(i) Pillar 1—Strengthening the resilience of the healthcare system. The Danish recovery plan will try to improve the resilience of the healthcare system by analysing the effects of the recent pandemic, implementing new digital solutions, such as monitoring systems. Components: 1.1-Measures to ensure stocks of critical drugs; 1.2-Digital solutions in the healthcare system; 1.3-Clinical study of the effect of COVID-19 vaccines; 1.4-Emergency management % monitoring of critical medical products;

(ii) Pillar 2—Green Transition for Agriculture and Environment. This initiative will try to lower greenhouse gas emissions and rehabilitate the soil and groundwater. Components: 2.1-Organic Farming; 2.2-Plant-Based Organic Projects; 2.3-Organic Transition of Public Kitchens; 2.4-Organic Innovation Centre; 2.5-Climate Technologies in Agriculture; 2.6-Carbon Rich Soils; 2.7-Rehabilitation of Industrial sites and contaminated land;

(iii) Pillar 3—Energy Efficiency. Green heating and Carbon Capture and Storage. In order to achieve the ambitious EU goals, this initiative will try to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 0.1Mt Co_2 in 2025 and try to develop new, innovative ways to store CO_2. Components: 3.1-Replacing oil burners and gas furnaces; 3.2-Energy efficiency in all industries; 3.3-Energy renovation in public buildings; 3.4-Energy efficiency in households; 3.5-CCS-storage potential;

(iv) Pillar 4—Green Tax Reforms. This initiative will increase tax rates on fossil fuels for industry, and in a second phase, introduce a uniform carbon tax. Components: 4.1-Investment window; 4.2-Accelerated depreciation; 4.3-Expert group to prepare proposals for a CO_2 e-tax; 4.4-Emission tax on industries;

(v) Pillar 5—Sustainable Road Transport. Road transport accounts for about 90% of greenhouse gas emissions in Denmark. This initiative sets out strong measures to achieve a major reduction in these emissions. Components: 5.1-Incentive to choose green cars; 5.2-Analysis, tests and campaigns for greener transport; 5.3-Green transport and infrastructure;

(vi) Pillar 6—Digitalisation. This initiative is a flagship of Denmark's government, proposing investment to support a digital transition even further, strengthening broadband connectivity and enabling more citizens to use digital solutions. Components: 6.1-Digital Strategy; 6.2-Broadband pool; 6.3-SMEs' digital transition and export;

(vii) Pillar 7—Green Research and Development. Denmark is aware that the country will not meet the 70% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions just by reducing current greenhouse gas emissions. Only by investing in research can the target be met. Components: 7.1-Research in green solutions; 7.2-Incentives to boost R&D in companies.

The plan is expected to have a positive impact of 0.4–0.6% on the Danish economy and to create around 8000 jobs by 2026.

2.2.1.7 Ireland's Recovery and Resilience Plan[15]

The Irish RRP is a national programme that will implement a set of 16 investment measures and 9 reforms across 3 priorities. This plan is expected to help Ireland to prepare for the future, and by this, we mean transforming Ireland into a more sustainable, greener and more digital country. Such ambitious goals need ambitious funding, and Ireland will achieve this by using not only the available facility funds, but also complementing it with the European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund and Just Transition Fund.[16] As stated, Ireland's RRP has 3 main priorities:

(i) Priority 1—Advancing the Green Transition**.** Ireland is lagging behind other EU Member States in tackling decarbonisation. This priority will reverse this trend and improve efforts towards decarbonisation. Components: I1.1-De-risking a Low Cost Retrofit Loan Scheme; I1.2-Accelerate Decarbonisation of the Enterprise Sector; I1.3-A Public Sector Retrofit Pathfinder Project; I1.4-Enable Future Electrification Through Targeted Investment in Cork Commuter Rail; I1.5-A National Grand Challenges Programme; I1.6-The Enhanced Rehabilitation of Peatland; I1.7-River Basin Management Plan. R1.8-Progressing the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Bill; R1.9-Implementation of the Base Broadening Carbon Tax measures as currently legislated for;

(ii) Priority 2—Accelerating and Expanding Digital Reforms and Transformation. It is an Irish ambition to provide a better experience for citizens, businesses and public services. Components: I2.1-Development of a Shared Government Data Centre; I2.2-Programme to Drive Digital Transformation of Enterprise in Ireland; I2.3-Programme to Provide Digital Infrastructure and Funding to Schools; I2.4-Online Response Option for the Population Census; I2.5-Using 5G Technology to promote a Greener and More Innovative Ireland; I2.6-Roll out a number of Health initiatives; R2.7-Address the Digital Divide and Enhance Digital Skills;

(iii) Priority 3—Social and Economic Recovery and Job Creation. Ireland aims to support people's return to work and preparation for the challenges of the future. This priority also includes a suite of 6 reforms to specifically address important social and economic policy needs identified in Ireland's Specific Recommendations. Components. I3.1-Work Placement Experience Programme; I3.2-Solas Recovery Skills Response Programme; I3.3-The Technological Universities Transformation Fund. R3.4-Reducing Regulatory Barriers to Entrepreneurship; R3.5-Strengthening Ireland's capacity to prevent money laundering; R3.6-The urge to address aggressive tax planning; R3.7-Simplifying and Harmonizing Ireland's Pensions Reforms; R3.8-Increase the Provision of Social and Affordable Housing; R3.9-Healthcare Reform.

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[15] https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/d4939-national-recovery-and-resilience-plan-2021/.

[16] Information available on Ireland's National Recovery and Resilience Plan - Europe's contribution to Ireland's RRP, p.17.

The plan is expected to increase GPD by 0.3–0.5% and to create 6200 jobs by 2026. The spill-over effects of this plan are expected to improve gross domestic product by 0.4%.

2.2.1.8 Sweden's Recovery and Resilience Plan[17]

With a total volume of €3 289 million, Sweden's RRP is of comparatively limited scope, and based exclusively on grants, as Sweden did not apply for loans. This amount represents 0.5% of the entire ERRF, equal to 0.7% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2019. Sweden is also complementing this funding with the European Regional Development Fund (2021–2027) and the Cohesion Policy.[18]

The Swedish plan is structured around five priorities:

(i) Priority 1—Green Recovery. Aims to contribute to sustainable growth, and accelerate climate transition across the country. The Swedish government has the ambition to make Sweden the world's first fossil-free welfare country, and achieve carbon neutrality by 2045. Components: C1.1-Local and Regional Climate Investment; C1.2-Industry Leap; C1.3-Energy efficiency in multi-dwelling buildings; C1.4-Strengthened railway support; C1.5-Protection of valuable nature;
(ii) Priority 2—Education and Transition. Focuses on better employment opportunities for the unemployed, and workforce training to facilitate adaptation to an increasingly digital society. Components: C2.1-More Study Places in regional adult vocational education; C2.2-More Study Places in higher vocational education; C2.3-Resources to meet the demands for education at universities and other educational institutions;
(iii) Priority 3—Meeting Demographic Challenges. Sweden seeks to improve the quality of the long-term care system; ensure financing of the public sector and society's proper functioning for individuals and businesses; and combat crime. Components. C3.1-Elderly care initiative;
(iv) Priority 4—Broadband expansion and digitalisation of public administration. It aims to develop Sweden's digital infrastructure further, making public administration more efficient and effective by seizing the opportunities offered by digitalisation. Components: C4.1-Joint Public administration digital infrastructure; C4.2-Broadband expansion;
(v) Priority 5—investment for growth and housing. Tackles problems in the Swedish housing market and the related high household debt. Components: C5.1-Investment aid for rental and student housing.

The plan is expected to have a positive impact of 0.2–0.3% on Sweden's GDP and create 4000 new jobs by 2026.

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[17] https://www.regeringen.se/rapporter/2021/05/sveriges-aterhamtningsplan/.

[18] https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/countries/SE/21-27.

2.3 Strategic and Functional Articulation Between RRPs and CP 2021–2027

Among the Member States analysed in this chapter, some of the RRPs make explicit mention of the need for forms of strategic articulation between the RRPs and CP 2021–2027. Even so, they do not explain how this articulation will be achieved. Perhaps this articulation will be fully operationalized when the CP Partnership Agreements of each Member State are fully approved.

Regarding conciliation solutions, and strategic and functional articulation between the RRPs and the CP Partnership Agreements, Neto et al. (2021, 2022a, b, c) analysed this issue in detail within the scope of the Research Project *Monitoring the Recovery - Proposal for a conceptual model and methodology for monitoring Portugal's economic and social recovery in a COVID-19 and post-pandemic context*. This project was developed at the UMPP—Public Policy Monitoring Unit of the University of Évora, Portugal, and financed by the Technical Assistance Programme (POAT 2020) (POAT-01-6177-FEDER-000049) of the Portuguese Partnership Agreement, PORTUGAL 2020. All results related to this Research Project are available on the UMPP—Public Policy Monitoring Unit Internet portal.[19]

2.4 RRPs and the Territorialization of Approaches

As discussed in Table 2.1, the ERRF did not foresee the need for a territorial approach in the design and intervention model of the national RRPs. Perhaps for this reason, in the Member States studied in this chapter, only in the case of the RRPs of Spain and Italy is there concern about ensuring some type of intervention with a criterion of a territorial nature. Indeed, in all EU Member States, the option of not territorializing RRPs was the most general choice. That does not necessarily mean that the ERRF does not contribute to territorial cohesion processes. Conversely, by supporting investments in the domains of socio-economic cohesion, environmental sustainability, as a well as territorial governance related processes, the ERRF has the potential to act as a complementary policy mechanism of the goals of CP, in supporting territorial cohesion pillars (Medeiros 2016).

2.5 Conclusions

The simultaneous implementation period of the RRPs 2021–2026 and the CP Partnership Agreements 2021–2027 presents a very important opportunity to support the economic and social national recovery of the EU Member States post-COVID-19 and create better future conditions for their resilience and through the respective RRPs, as well as continuing to implement the CP, and its European objectives (including territorial cohesion), through the CP Partnership Agreements.

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[19] https://www.umpp.uevora.pt/Atividades/Projeto-Monitorizacao-da-Recuperacao.

This is therefore an important time to reconcile national priorities for development, recovery, resilience and European cohesion objectives. It is crucial to create national and European solutions for strategic and functional articulation, which make it possible, at the level of each Member State, to maximize the use of available resources as well as the effects and impacts arising from the implementation of the respective RRPs and CP Partnership Agreements.

At a time when three major public policy instruments with EU support are being implemented simultaneously—the RRPs, the CP 2020 Partnership Agreements and the CP 2030 Partnership Agreements—this is a crucial moment to relocate territorialisation at the heart of the systemic articulation of their implementation.

The RRPs will drive the Member States' reform and investment agenda for the nest years, and, from 2022, the European Semester[20] process has been adapted to take into account the creation of the ERRF and the implementation of the RRPs. In this perspective, *2022 European Semester: Annual sustainable growth survey*,[21] confirmed "the on-going gradual shift of economic policy coordination from dealing with the COVID crisis to laying the foundations for a transformational and inclusive recovery and stronger resilience, in line with the EU's strategy of competitive sustainability".

The *European Recovery and Resilience Scoreboard*[22] (ERRS) also gives a very important "overview of how the implementation of the ERRF and the RRPs is progressing",[23] by displaying EU countries' progress in implementing their recovery and resilience plans and shows common indicators[24] to report on progress and evaluate the Recovery and Resilience Facility and the national plans.[25] Being structured by pillars, milestones and targets, disbursements, and thematic analyses, the ERRS produces a very detailed analysis, by Member State and at European Union level.

The analysis carried out in this chapter thus contributed to the study of the extent to which the new European rationale of policies to respond to the economic and social impacts of the pandemic, and in particular through the ERRF, as well as a comparative analysis of the intervention rationales of the RRPs of a set of Member States—namely Portugal, Greece, Italy, Spain, Germany, Denmark, Ireland and Sweden—and it was possible to conclude that in all EU Member States studied: (i) The option of not territorializing RRPs was the most general choice; (ii) Only some of the RRPs make explicit mention of the need for forms of strategic articulation between the RRPs and CP 2021-–2027.

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[20] The European Semester is the framework for integrated surveillance and coordination of economic and employment policies across the European Union. Since its introduction in 2011, it has become a well-established forum for discussing EU countries' fiscal, economic and employment policy challenges under a common annual timeline. https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/eu-economic-governance-monitoring-prevention-correction/european-semester_en.

[21] https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/2022-european-semester-annual-sustainable-growth-survey_en.

[22] https://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/recovery-and-resilience-scoreboard/.

[23] https://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/recovery-and-resilience-scoreboard/.

[24] Established by the European Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2021/2106, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32021R2106&qid=1639489753977.

[25] https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/recovery-coronavirus/recovery-and-resilience-facility_en.

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Part II
Socioeconomic Development Policies for Territorial Cohesion

Chapter 3
Equal Opportunities, Fair Work and Social Protection: Impacts of COVID-19 on Young People in Portuguese Rural Territories

Francisco Simões, Renato Miguel do Carmo, and Bernardo Fernandes

Abstract Several international organizations, as well as worldwide scholarship, have abundantly shown that young people under 34 are among the groups struggling the most with COVID-19 economic and social impacts. Seldom, however, does scholarship focus on the uneven effects of the pandemic on younger generations across different types of territories. Overall, young people in rural territories tend to face much greater adversities. These territories concentrate less population, show strong ageing trends trend and depict a lower settlement rate. Rural younger generations struggle to strive, because rural areas depend heavily on declining economic activities, such as farming, are plagued by precarious jobs, and display limited institutional support compared to (sub)urban areas. In Portugal, the country's population is unevenly distributed between affluent, high-density coastal areas and inlands and archipelagos with a considerable rural predominance. The COVID-19 crisis has the potential to further stretch the existing inequalities among young people due to spatial distribution. Therefore, in this chapter, we discuss the impact of the recent pandemic crisis on rural Portuguese young people. We will do so by characterizing headline indicators in the three domains of the European Pillar of Social Rights, namely equal opportunities (e.g. Early School Leavers from Education and Training), fair working conditions (e.g. Youth Unemployment), and social protection and inclusion (e.g. at risk of poverty and social exclusion). We expect to reach an initial comprehension of the challenges faced by rural Portuguese young people in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis in three domains: education, employment and social inclusion. We also discuss how more nuanced territorial conceptualizations (e.g. low-density areas)

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and policymaking can add alternative views about young people's living conditions due to subnational disparities.

Keywords COVID-19 · Young people · Rurality · Education · Employment

3.1 Introduction

In historical turning points such as the COVID-19 pandemic, negative representations of young people's futures become more salient. Such representations are further supported by evidence. A recent report (Eurofound 2021) shows that, in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis, European younger generations aged 18–29 were hardest hit by job loss, overrepresented in economic sectors most impacted by the sanitary restrictions, and more likely to have part-time or temporary contracts that terminated due to economic activity slow-down. This age group was also more likely to experience house insecurity or to report difficulties making ends meet compared to other age groups.

For the past decade, scholars are growingly interested in the intersection between spatialization and youth development. Although facing greater adversity and, thus, an increased risk of marginalization, less attention has been granted to younger generations' experiences in rural territories. Rural territories are mostly regions combining shrinking demography (low population density, ageing and high rates of outmigration, especially among younger generations) with declining economies (including lack of relevant industry, the predominance of primary sector activities, incipient levels of innovation and entrepreneurship, limited job demand) and low levels of institutional support (e.g. limited access to services) (Bæck 2016). However, little is known about how the recent COVID-19 pandemic impacted rural younger generations. Namely, it is uncertain if the pandemic side effects followed or further stretched these negative structural conditions, especially in countries such as Portugal with significantly vulnerable rural communities.

Bearing this in mind, in this chapter, we seek to fulfil two aims. First, we describe younger generations' inequalities across Portuguese rural and urban territories before and during the COVID-19 period. Specifically, we examine the main indicators of the three different dimensions of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR): equal opportunities, fair working conditions, and social protection and inclusion, as key pillars of territorial cohesion (Medeiros 2016). Secondly, we reflect on the implications in terms of education, employment, and social inclusion for rural young people stemming from our analysis. In doing so, we also add a few conceptual and policy-making implications stemming from our discussion.

Our work seeks to make incremental, novel, and pertinent contributions to the scholarship on territorial socioeconomic inequalities towards more balanced and cohesive territorial development (Medeiros and Rauhut 2020). Firstly, we seek to expand the knowledge about younger generations' social inequalities in rural territories. Our contribution connects well with an increasing demand to unpack the disparities involving younger generations at subnational territorial levels (Cefalo and Scandurra 2021; Cefalo et al. 2020). We adopt a multidimensional standpoint of social inequalities (Costa and Carmo 2015) to address our goals in face of preliminary evidence showing that disparities at the subnational level are increasing in youth-related dimensions such as education (Bæck 2016), employment (Cefalo and Scandurra 2021), or social inclusion (Simões 2022). Therefore, new research efforts must add within-countries comparative layer to the dominant methodological (inter)nationalism (Scandurra et al. 2021) that focuses mostly on the contrasts between North–South or East/West blocks (Cefalo et al. 2020), on institutional arrangements in the form of transitional regimes (Pastore 2015) or in the differences between countries (Brzinsky-Fay 2014).

Secondly, our efforts bring novelty to territorial inequalities/cohesion literature, as the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on younger generations' social conditions in rural territories remains absent from scholarly discussions. Some marginal considerations about the uneven impacts of COVID-19 on youth-related dimensions across the urban–rural divide can be found elsewhere (e.g. Simões 2022). However, these reflections are far from providing a more systematic picture of how the pandemic impacted rural young people.

Finally, we seek to add pertinence to our work by focusing on the social impacts of COVID-19 on Portuguese young people in rural territories. We believe this contribution is relevant in the European context because Portugal is one of the countries where the asymmetries between (sub)urban territories and rural territories are sharper, due to a clear socioeconomic divide between coastal and inland/remote (e.g. archipelagos) areas (Mauritti et al. 2019). Moreover, Portugal is among the EU countries projected to experience a 21–27% population decline until 2050, with a higher loss (−20%) in seven NUTS-3 regions located in inland, mostly rural border regions (Silva et al. 2021). This territorial divide is a major source of inequalities for younger generations (Simões 2018), making it more important to understand how a challenge such as a pandemic further stretches or even challenges these inequalities. We, therefore, follow the evidence showing that crises have an increasingly damaging potential for young people living in more vulnerable territories (Cefalo and Scandurra 2021). Still, such a harsh interruption of daily lives can have unintended, although limited positive effects on young people's and territories' prospects. For instance, some reports show that after COVID-19, rural territories are now described as safer, more natural, less restrictive environments, where new opportunities are shaping up—such as remote work—which can come to positively affect rural young people's lives (Silva et al. 2021).

The remainder of this chapter unfolds as follows. First, we briefly define rural areas. Afterwards, we discuss the main features of young generations in rural areas, in terms of shrinking demography, declining economies and limited institutional support. Then, we describe COVID-19 impacts on Portuguese young people living in rural areas, based on the EPSR selected indicators. We conclude with a critical discussion of the multidimensional consequences of COVID-19 for Portuguese rural young people in the areas of education, employment and social inclusion, as key components of public policies towards territorial cohesion.

3.2 EU and Portuguese Rural Areas: A Snapshot

European rural areas correspond to low population density regions: <300 inhabitants per km^2 and a minimum population of 5,000 (Eurostat 2018). In the EU, rural areas account for 341,000,000 inhabitants, representing 30.60% of the EU's population. Demographically, depopulation in these areas is associated with ageing and the enormous difficulty in attracting or retaining young people. Gender balance has become another demographic issue for these territories as well, with the share of men increasing in several countries (e.g. Germany) as women are more prone to leave rural territories (Leibert 2016). From an economic standpoint, rural territories tend to struggle with a considerable predominance of the primary sector, particularly farming, and accelerated deindustrialization (Zipin et al. 2015). Rural communities are ethnically homogeneous and show strong social networks and local identities (Ludden 2011) in the context of limited or low-quality institutional support (Shore and Tosun 2019).

In Portugal, rural territories are mostly located in the inland part of the country. On the other hand, a larger predominance of urban and densely populated areas is located on the coastland, particularly in the Metropolitan Areas of Lisbon and Porto and on the Algarve coast (in the south). A significant part of the rural territories has been losing population continuously since the 70s and 80s of the past century, to which must be added a strong ageing population trend. These areas are, therefore, marked by a high socio-demographic regression.

From a socio-economic point of view, Portuguese rural areas have severe vulnerabilities, which are reproduced, in part, due to the weakness of entrepreneurial activities and a lack of economic vitality (Ferrão et al. 2023). For this reason, employment offers tend to be reduced, which greatly limits the dynamization of local and regional labour markets. This framework is partially compensated by employment in the public sector due to the construction and implementation of various facilities and social services that implied the hiring of some specialized and relatively qualified professionals. However, with the closure of some of these services determined by political options, due to the low demand, these territories have not only suffered a process of functional dismantlement but also are increasingly unprotected and distant from public institutions that promote social inclusion. This dilapidation is particularly notorious not only in the education and healthcare sectors (with the closure of schools and health units since the early 2000s) but also in local administration (with the merge between parish councils) (Ferrão et al. 2023; Mauritti et al. 2022).

The socio-economic regression in rural areas has consequences at the level of spatial planning. Agricultural and forestry areas are no longer properly maintained, which contributes to the intensification of environmental risks (Mauritti et al. 2022). In fact, the lack of residents and of people of working age led to the degradation of rural areas and to greater difficulty in facing the consequences of climate change. The recurrent outbreak of forest fires, increasingly aggressive and unexpected, is a paradigmatic example of the difficulty in articulating spatial planning policies with those of environmental risk prevention in these territories.

3.3 Young People in Rural Areas

The social divide between young people living in rural areas from those living in (sub)urban areas is driven, to a great extent, by rural areas' own features, including how they position themselves regarding shrinking demography, declining economies and institutional support limitations.

3.3.1 Youth and Shrinking Demography

Rural areas ageing trends stem from a combination of multiple factors from a considerable drop in the birth rate to economic features such as the lack of industry (Zipin et al. 2015) or the centrality of the farming sector (Simões et al. 2021a, b), resulting in a low capacity to attract young workers.

Younger generations deal with rural shrinking demography mostly through mobilities. Youth mobilities refer to a wide range of movements between places encompassing repeat, circular and onward migration. Mobilities are, thus, distinct from migration classically defined as a one-shot, unidirectional long move from an origin to a destination country (King and Williams 2018; Farrugia 2016). Youth mobilities definition is, thus, in line with the fluid nature of the migratory phenomenon in the contemporary world (King and Williams 2018), shaped by major trends such as globalization or work feminization (King 2018).

Mobilities of young people living in rural areas have been largely depicted from the outmigration (Farrugia 2016) and brain-draining (Theodori and Theodori 2015) perspectives. These lines of inquiry detail a leading trend of young people moving from rural territories to more affluent, urban areas within the country or abroad (Farrugia 2016) in a relatively permanent way. These movements are driven by young people's expectations to improve their education and skills (Theodori and Theodori 2015), have access to more qualified and rewarding jobs (Weiss et al. 2021), delve into a modern lifestyle matching their own values (Farrugia 2016) and increase upawards social mobility odds (Silva et al. 2021). This trend has been interpreted in different ways. Some authors fit youth outmigration from rural areas in the periphery–core movements of people from poorer regions and countries to large economic centers, due to the uneven distribution of opportunities and resources (King 2018). Others (e.g. Farrugia 2016) see in the dominant youth outmigration from rural areas the triumph of a metrocentric narrative whereby young people's happiness and success are situated and limited to urban places.

While outmigration represents, indeed, the major youth mobility trend shaping rural territories' demography, there are important nuances that need to be considered. On one hand, for the past decade, there has been a significant increase in the share of young people living in rural areas in some European countries such as Denmark, France, Italy or Germany (Eurostat 2021), needing greater analysis. Moreover, there is a diversification of mobilities involving young people from rural areas, including short-term or returning movements. These tendencies have started to attract the attention of scholars, with some studies trying to untangle the factors behind, for instance, the return of younger generations to rural areas after tertiary education in countries such as Portugal (Simões et al. 2021a, b) or Switzerland (Rérat 2014). One important contribution of this line of inquiry is to show that emotional geographies in the form of bonds to local communities and places are significant predictors of rural young people circular (Nugin 2019) or returning intentions (Simões et al. 2021a, b; Silva et al. 2021; Rérat 2014), even if this option is socially represented as a failure (Farrugia 2016). While leaving and staying can coexist (Nugin 2019) and returning can also be an option under certain circumstances (Silva et al. 2021; Simões et al. 2021a, b) outmigration continues to be the dominant mobility trend among younger generations originating in rural areas. Consequently, the ones staying are those who are less-academic minded, especially men, without the financial resources to move out (Farrrugia 2016). This phenomenon further increases social gaps between young people living in rural areas and (sub)urban territories.

3.3.2 Declining Economies

Rural youth mobilities overlap with decision-making associated with the school-to-work transition. For the past decades, school-to-work transition has become longer, and more uncertain (Cefalo et al. 2020). Often, youth professional pathways involve experiences of precariousness, unemployment and limited access to learning and skills development (Carmo and Matias 2019), blocking the fulfilment of independent life (Cefalo et al. 2020).

The route towards an independent life is narrower and much more complex in rural areas due to local economic suboptimal conditions. These territories struggle with the dominance of the primary sector, especially family-owned farming businesses (Simões et al. 2021a, b). This translates into economic ecosystems deprived of innovation, misaligned from major paradigm shifts (e.g. green transition) and showing incipient levels of entrepreneurship able to transform local resources in modern business models. This dominant economic context is coupled with an ongoing dismantling of industrial capacity, with several collateral effects, including less obvious ones such as the loss of experienced workers who can mentor younger generations in developing skills in these activities (Zipin et al. 2015).

A declining rural economy on youth social conditions translates into a weaker youth labour market, offering only a few jobs, mostly temporary ones in a limited number of sectors (Cefalo and Scandurra 2021; Dayaram et al. 2020). Recent findings by Cefalo et al. (2020) further illustrate this, by showing a marked variation in youth labour market integration not only across countries but also across regions, especially in Southern countries such as Spain or Italy. Regions displaying a lower GDP and lower demand for more qualified jobs are disproportionally rural regions showing lower rates of young people's labour market integration as well (Cefalo and Scandurra 2021). Interestingly, increasing the supply of tertiary-educated graduates is not enough to improve young people's labour market integration, demonstrating that job supply is also dependent on local economic conditions (Cefalo and Scandurra 2021). Moreover, youth labour markets in rural areas are often shaped by the sudden booming of specific industries or services such as mining (Dayaram et al. 2020) or tourism (Diaz-Serrano and Nilsson 2020). However, these activities are characterized by employing low-skilled labourers, rarely creating job opportunities for young locals, and have detrimental effects on the population's educational attainment (Dayaram et al. 2020).

The above-mentioned youth outmigration is one of the immediate consequences associated with the deprived economic ecosystems of rural areas. Another outcome of rural territories' economic decline is the perpetuation of the inter-generational cycle of poverty and inequalities due to unemployment or precariousness (Dayaram et al. 2020; Carmo and Matias 2019). Moreover, young people facing longer, or more recurrent spells of unemployment or underemployment will necessarily delay the accumulation of work experience, while having limited access to relevant training, meaning the one leading to differentiation and specialization (Dayaram et al. 2020; Simões and Rio 2020). Finally, strong differences in youth job market integration can lead to what Cefalo et al. (2020) label as the geography of discontent. Indeed, large shares of unemployed or inactive young people fuel the resentment among whole generations living in rural territories in Europe constituting an important driver of populist and extremist movements (Moore 2019).

3.3.3 Institutional Support

Institutional support plays a pivotal role in producing key outcomes for youth such as access to training opportunities (Simões and Rio 2020), the development of soft skills associated with employability (Schoon and Heckhausen 2019), or an overall smoother integration in the labour market (Cefalo et al. 2020). The research focusing on institutional arrangements aimed at young people has mostly focused on the comparisons between school to work regimes (e.g. Pastore 2015) or between countries (e.g. Brzinsky-Fay 2014). Slowly, the focus has shifted to the subnational level, with analyses of regional disparities regarding specific outcomes such as youth unemployment (Cefalo et al. 2020). Two lines of inquiry have emerged from the literature in this respect.

Firstly, it is evident that regional asymmetries in institutional support jeopardizing young people's social conditions emerge from the lack of infrastructure in rural areas. By infrastructure, we mean both facilities and human resources in terms of qualified personnel to deliver services. This structural problem results in narrower access to and lower coverage of public services. Both problems are evident, for instance, in the educational sector. Indeed, rural areas struggle with lower quality school buildings, inefficient educational networks, greater distances between students' homes and schools (Bæck 2016) and lower capacity from regional educational authorities to attract and retain high-quality teachers (Reagan et al. 2019). The same problems of access and coverage apply to public employment services operating in rural areas. Indeed, these services struggle to outreach or activate vulnerable young people, such as those neither in Employment nor in Education or Training (NEET). This is due to a combination of a lack of on-the-ground services and personnel with insufficient collaboration with the third-sector organizations capable of amplifying the interventions' impacts (Smoter 2022).

Secondly, institutional support in rural areas is ineffective, failing to deliver services and programmes that match local economic opportunities with young people's needs. This mismatch between territorial resources and young people's expectations is evident, again, in the educational sector. This problem is illustrated by the implementation of vocational education and training programmes without targeting the regional most promising economic sectors (Simões and Rio 2020). The employment services operating in rural areas also struggle with the same limitation, but due to different reasons. Job counsellors and caseworkers often lack the autonomy and/or the resources to adjust major policy instruments (e.g. Youth Guarantee) to regional/local conditions, resulting in clear inconsistencies between policy goals and on-the-ground outcomes (Shore and Tosun 2019).

Limited or ineffective institutional support leads to distrust in institutions among young people in rural territories. This is worrisome considering that institutional support in rural areas competes with informal support provided by families, friends and communities overall, limiting young people to the resources made available through their most immediate social ties. This translates into restricted access to education, especially among women (Bæck 2016), and lower access to qualified and decent jobs (Simões and Rio 2020), further stretching the gap between younger generations in these territories and those living in the most affluent regions.

3.4 COVID-19 Impacts on Portuguese Young People Living in Rural Areas

Reaching adulthood involves important changes in subjective dimensions. Young people become more open to new experiences, social relationships and roles while developing wisdom-related knowledge or greater maturity (Arnett 2014). However, becoming an adult is also a process deeply shaped by the structural features that compose the socioeconomic environment with deep implications for educational choices and professional development opportunities (Masdonati et al. 2021).

From early on, COVID-19 had a systemic, negative impact on several structural forces that influence young people's lives. In terms of formal education, schools were closed, and classes were done remotely. Regarding the labour market, temporary and part-time jobs were not available anymore, due to strict lockdowns. This resulted in job loss and job insecurity among younger generations, as precarious contractual forms are more common among young workers (Eurofound 2021). Consequently, many young people struggled to meet basic needs due to income loss (Eurofound 2021).

It remains unclear how this systemic impact of the COVID-19 crisis followed or even stretched previously existent gaps between rural and urban young people in terms of education, employment, or social conditions. This is very relevant for public policy development, especially in asymmetrical countries such as Portugal where cohesion policy packages should also address younger generations' life conditions (Silva et al. 2021; Simões 2022). To better tackle this gap, we decided to depict some of the headline indicators in the three domains of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR). The EPSR is seen as a compass that translates a process of renewed socio-economic convergence in the EU, towards territorial cohesion, based on a scoreboard of selected indicators. It constitutes, therefore, a beacon for analyzing how much fairness or equality is driving EU societies (EC 2021). Considering our purposes, we selected indicators of each of the EPSR domains containing specific information for younger groups (e.g. 15–24 years old) except for the risk of poverty and social exclusion. We then further broke down the indicators by EU and Portugal cities and rural areas. We choose to describe all the indicators since 2010, to capture the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis as well as the subsequent recovery period.

3.4.1 Equal Opportunities: Education and Transition to the Labour Market

The EPSR equal opportunities dimension includes indicators of skills development, lifelong learning, and active support for employment. All these elements are indispensable to ensure increasing employment opportunities, facilitating transitions between different employment statuses, and improving the employability of individuals. In this domain, we depicted two indicators. The first one, Early School Leaving from Education and Training, refers to the share of the population aged 18–24 with at most the lower secondary education (ISCED-4) who were not involved in any education or training. This is a key indicator for examining young people's living conditions in the transition from school to work. Secondary education attainment not only is a requirement to progress to tertiary education but is also essential in ensuring that countries increase their share of intermediate professionals in the workforce (Buchanan et al. 2017). The importance of reducing Early School Leaving from Education and Training is stressed by strategic EU documents, such as the communication from the EC (2020) on Achieving the Education Area. According to that key document, the share of people aged 20–24 years old with at least an upper secondary qualification should reach 90% in 2025 in the EU. While improving, Early School Leaving from Education and Training remains higher in rural regions of Southern and Eastern countries (Simões 2022).

Figure 3.1 shows that: (a) in 2010, Portuguese cities and rural areas had considerably higher shares of early leavers from education and training when compared to

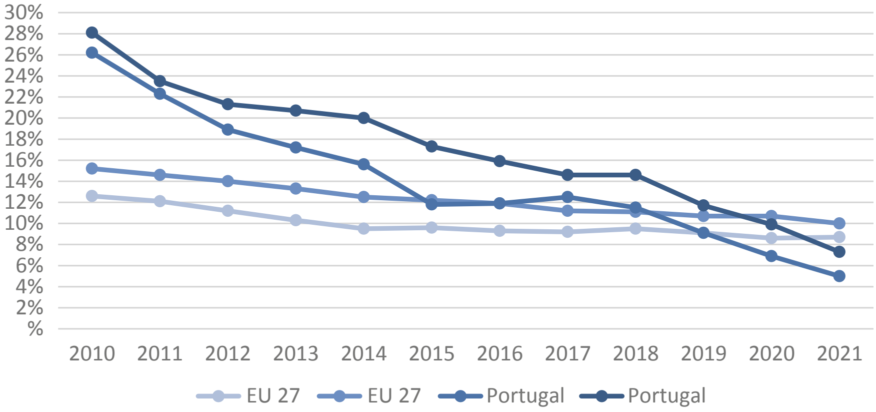

Fig. 3.1 Early leavers from education and training (2010–2021) in EU 27 and Portugal (%), by degree of urbanization (Eurostat 2022b) data extracted on 25 July 2022

the EU27; (b) by 2021, these rates had decreased significantly in Portugal standing below EU rates for both cities and rural areas; and (c) the declining trend remained from 2019 to 2020 and from 2020 to 2021, during the COVID-19 crisis.

Another relevant indicator included in the equal opportunities dimension of the EPSR scoreboard is the rate of young people neither in Employment nor in Education or Training (NEET). The acronym refers to the share of the population aged 15–29 who are not employed and not enrolled in education or training. This subset of young people constitutes, therefore, a very comprehensive descriptor of school-to-work transition processes. The breadth of this category is, simultaneously, its major limitation. NEET youth constitute a very diverse group, covering different subgroups of unemployed youth (short-term and long-term) as well unavailable young people outside the labour market for different reasons (illness or physical/psychological incapacities, family care duties, feeling discouraged to find a job) (Mascherini 2019). The EU has set ambitious targets regarding the reduction of NEETs. According to the ESPR (EC 2021), it is expected that the share of young people in this condition has been reduced to at least 9% by 2030 in the EU. Again, rural areas of Southern and Eastern countries are more affected by higher shares of NEETs (Simões 2022).

Following our analyses, Fig. 3.2 shows that: (a) the NEET rate peeked for all levels of analysis between 2012 and 2013, before a steady decline until 2019, with the exception of Portuguese rural areas, where in 2015 one can find a slight increase of the NEET share; (b) from 2019 to 2020, the NEET share increased for all levels of analysis, reflecting the first impact of the pandemic; and (c) the rates of NEET declined, again, from 2020 to 2021, to pre-pandemic levels, in all levels of analysis.

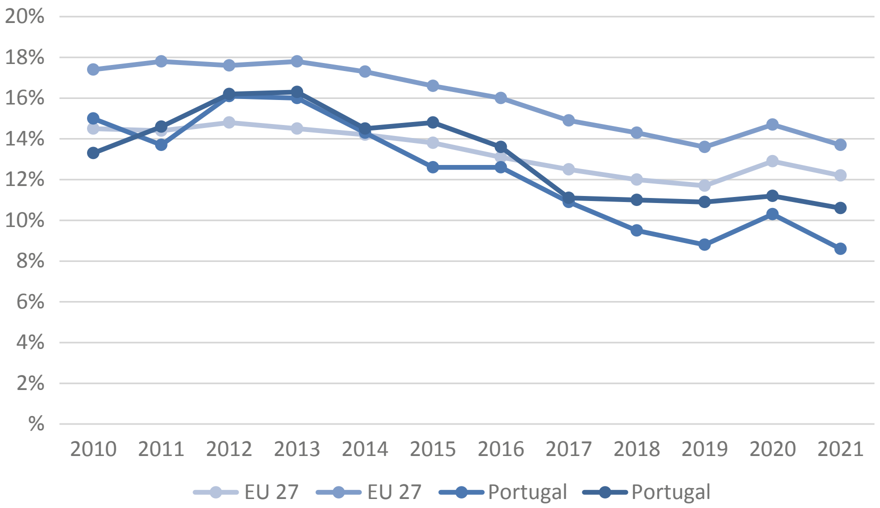

Fig. 3.2 Young people neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET) (2010–2021) in EU 27 and Portugal (%), by age (15–29 years) and degree of urbanization (Eurostat 2022c) data extracted on 6 October 2022

3.4.2 *Fair Working Conditions: Youth (un)employment*

A second dimension of the EPSR is dedicated to fair working conditions. This dimension includes a series of indicators covering the balance between flexibility and security to facilitate job creation, job take-up, adaptability of firms and promotion of social dialogue (EC 2021). One relevant indicator of this EPSR dimension is youth unemployment. Youth unemployment is calculated by dividing the number of unemployed persons aged 15–24 by the total active population of the same age group. This indicator is meaningful for our approach because young people have twice the risk of being unemployed when compared to the adult workforce (ILO 2020). The EU's ambitions to reduce Youth Unemployment are embedded in the targets of the ESPR Action Plan (EC 2021). It is expected that at least 78% of people aged 20–64 are employed by 2030 within the EU.

According to Fig. 3.3, we can see that: (a) youth unemployment rates peaked in 2012 and 2013 across the different levels of analysis; (b) from then to 2019, youth unemployment rates consistently declined except for Portuguese rural areas, with an increase from 2014 to 2015; (c) youth unemployment has been increasing both in Portuguese cities and in rural areas, after the COVID-19 breakthrough, contrary to EU cities and rural areas, where after an increase from 2019 to 2020, youth unemployment shares slightly declined; and (d) youth unemployment in Portuguese cities and rural areas have consistently been above the EU cities and rural areas figures, although differences were bigger immediately after the 2008 crisis (2012 to 2016).

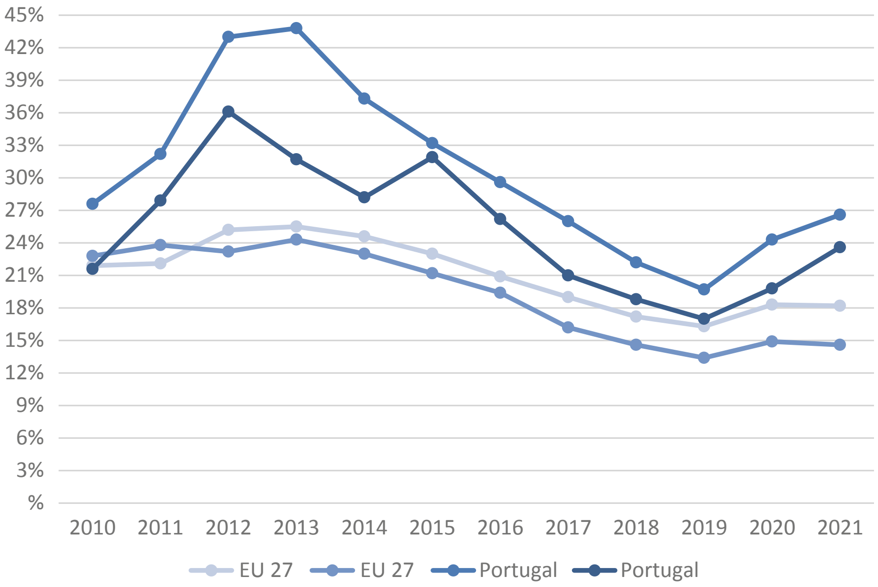

Fig. 3.3 Youth Unemployment (age group 15–24) (2010–2021) in EU 27 and Portugal (%), by degree of urbanization (Eurostat 2022d) data extracted on 27 July 2022

Youth unemployment analysis must be balanced with a consideration of how employment rates have evolved across different Portuguese territories. Under the second dimension of the EPSR, we have also considered the employment rates of those aged 15–39 years old by the selected levels of analysis. Youth employment refers to the percentage of employed persons in relation to the comparable total population. The consideration of this indicator is particularly meaningful for our work because young people have twice the risk of becoming unemployed when compared to adults as well as a higher risk of becoming a NEET in rural areas compared to cities, especially in Southern European countries (Simões 2022). According to Fig. 3.4, we can see that: (a) employment rates dropped to a minimum in 2013 across all levels of analysis; (b) from then to 2018 employment rates grew steadily, except for Portuguese rural areas from 2015 to 2016; (c) after 2018 in Portuguese rural areas and 2019 in Portuguese cities, employment rates decreased considerably, meaning that the gap to the European average rates has increased, only with a slight recover in 2021 for Portuguese rural areas; and (d) except for 2010 and 2018, Portuguese rural areas have always shown lower employment rates than EU27 rural areas since 2010.

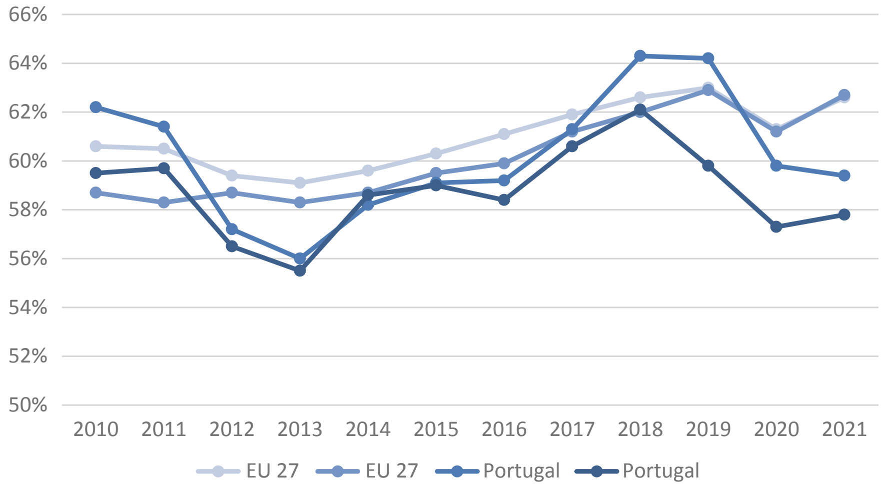

Fig. 3.4 Employment rates (age group 15–39) (2010–2021) in EU 27 and Portugal (%), and degree of urbanization (Eurostat 2022e) data extracted on 19 October 2022

3.4.3 Social Protection: Poverty, Social Exclusion and Health Needs

A third dimension of the EPSR covers social protection and inclusion. This dimension describes access to health, social protection benefits and high-quality services, including childcare, healthcare and long-term care, which are essential to ensure dignified living and protection against life's risks (EC 2021). One key indicator at this level is the share of People at Risk of Poverty and Social Exclusion. This indicator combines three components, namely the at-risk-of-poverty indicator, persons living in households with very low work intensity indicator and the severe material and social deprivation rate. This is, thus, a pivotal statistical source to understand how life conditions evolve in EU countries. The target for 2030 set by EPSR is that the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion is reduced by at least 15 million, including at least 5 million children, compared to 2019 (EC 2021). Figure 3.5 depicts the evolution of the share of People at Risk of Poverty and Social Exclusion in EU and Portuguese cities and rural areas. The available data covers a shorter period (starting in 2015) and does not specifically focus on the youth population. Still, it is important to understand the existing trends by the selected levels of analysis, as this may add to our discussion. One can conclude that (a) the risk of being in poverty or socially excluded has decreased for all levels, except for Portuguese rural areas, where it remains the same in 2021 compared to 2015; (b) in both Portuguese cities and rural areas, such risk has increased during the COVID-19 crisis, from 2020 to 2021; and (c) the gap between Portuguese cities and rural areas in this indicator has become more evident over the years.

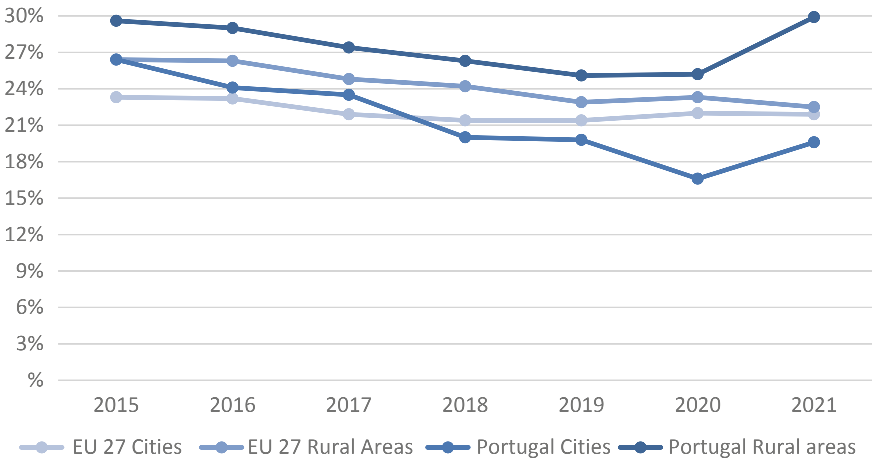

Fig. 3.5 Persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion (2015–2021) in EU 27 and Portugal (%), by degree of urbanization (Eurostat 2022f) data extracted on 27 July 2022

In the context of the third ESPR pillar, we have examined a second indicator, the self-reported unmet needs for medical care in the age group 16–29. This indicator refers to a person's own assessment of whether he or she needed a medical examination or treatment. Here, an assessment of unmet medical needs translates into being too expensive, involving long-distance travel, or being put on a waiting list. According to the EPSR action plan, everyone has the right to access affordable, preventive, curative and good quality healthcare (EC 2021). Although daily life returned to normal, COVID-19 continues to impact healthcare (e.g. operations and treatments were canceled or delayed, and staff has been redeployed) (Eurostat 2022g). Traditionally, rural areas stand out for their lower social inclusion (Mauritti et al. 2022), so this line of inquiry must also be accounted for our purposes. Figure 3.6 shows that for this indicator: (a) EU27 rates have been slowly improving from 2013 and 2014 until 2020, while the Portuguese figure in cities and rural areas are much more inconsistent; (b) between 2011 and 2014 unmet needs raised significantly in Portugal, especially in rural areas reaching the peak in 2014; (c) from 2020 to 2021 perceived levels of unmet medical care needs have increased in all levels of analysis with special prominence for Portuguese rural areas.

3.5 Discussion and Conclusion

In this chapter, we seek to address three interconnected claims. Firstly, there is an overall demand among scholars to expand the knowledge about younger generations' social inequalities in rural territories. Secondly, there is a specific need to understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on younger generations' life conditions in

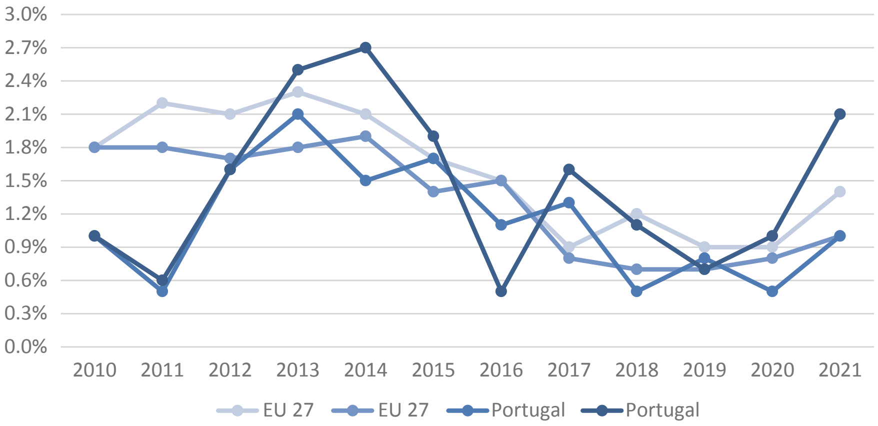

Fig. 3.6 Self-reported unmet need for medical care (age group 16–29) (2010–2020) in EU 27 and Portugal (%), by degree of urbanization (Eurostat 2022g) data extracted on 19 October 2022

rural territories. Thirdly, this understanding is especially required in those countries showing more striking asymmetries between rural and urban areas such as Portugal. To deliver these contributions, the analysis aimed at covering COVID-19 implications for Portuguese rural young people's education, employment and social inclusion, based on general indicators of the EPSR.

The first finding is that education attainment seems less impacted by the effects of the pandemic. This conclusion might, however, be deceiving. There is, indeed, a decrease in the share of Early School Leavers from Education and Training in Portuguese rural regions following the trends for Portuguese cities and EU cities and rural areas. This trajectory continued even during the pandemic years. These results are in line with other findings showing that secondary education attainment in Portuguese rural areas has consistently improved for the past decade (Simões et al. 2020). Importantly, these trends contradict the dominant pessimistic narrative spread about rural education outcomes. The existing research overemphasizes that rural schools often lead to worse educational outcomes due to a combination of infrastructural limitations with curricula disconnected from local values and priorities (Bæck 2016). The impressive and continued improvement of secondary school attainment in rural Portugal does tell another story. However, considering the massive school shutdowns during the pandemic period all over Portugal, it is still uncertain how school attainment during these years will translate into actual learning and skills development in the long term (Vieira and Ribeiro 2022), including for students in Portuguese rural areas.

In turn, the transition from school to work processes described by NEET shares pinpoints pre-existing concerns. Although NEET shares in Portuguese urban and rural areas are below the average EU rates, the share of NEETs in Portuguese rural areas has increased during the first year of the COVID-19 crisis and is declining slower compared to the share of NEETs in Portuguese urban areas. The slower decrease of NEET shares in Portuguese rural areas stems mainly from the composition of the rural young people population in terms of educational attainment and prospects. After completing secondary education, the most academic-minded rural young people, especially women, move to cities looking for improving their educational and professional status (Theodori and Theodori 2015; Weiss et al. 2021). On the contrary, those staying are mostly less-academic-minded men, accumulating several experiences of school failure and without the financial resources to move out (Farrugia 2016). The limited offer of personalized counselling services by public employment services or the lack of curricula matching young people's interests (e.g. adequate vocational education and training programmes) justify, in part, these unsuccessful educational pathways that complicate labour market integration in these regions (Simões and Rio 2020). Subsequently, the knowledge and skills of those remaining in rural areas are often mismatched with the local economic opportunities (Simões 2018). Therefore, the odds of these youths being trapped in precariousness, longer unemployment spells and, therefore, in a NEET situation driven by lower or inadequate education are much higher. These risks already existed before the COVID-19 crisis and will continue to press local institutions and decision-makers in forthcoming years.

The COVID-19 crisis impact on Portuguese rural young people's employment prospects is much more severe. Youth unemployment in Portuguese rural territories has kept rising from 2019 to 2020 and from 2020 to 2021 while stabilizing in Portuguese cities. In parallel, employment among those aged 15–39 in Portuguese rural areas is the lowest across all the selected levels of analysis and it has not recovered to pre-pandemic levels. Overall, there was a quick reaction from governments in implementing a wide range of generous measures to stabilize employment and income in the EU countries. This included reimbursing firms for payroll costs to preserve employment, the reinforcement of unemployment insurance systems or the provision of income relief for vulnerable families, with different combinations of these measures being adopted across countries (Eurofound 2021; ILO 2022). Still, it must be considered that the generous financial support provided by States in EU countries was unequal across States and within countries. For instance, Portugal was among those countries spending less on measures to mitigate the negative effects of COVID-19. Moreover, these policies often failed to reach out to the most disadvantaged youth, including those living in more remote areas (ILO 2022). This is a serious caveat of public policies, considering the continuous decline of rural economies, often dependent on family-owned businesses in the farming sector (Simões et al. 2021a, b), or the ongoing dismantling of industrial capacity in these territories (Zipin et al. 2015), which contributes to territorial exclusion rather than territorial cohesion trends (Medeiros 2016). As a result, the labour market structure offers a limited number of job opportunities to young people (Cefalo and Scandurra 2021; Dayaram et al. 2020), especially in Southern countries such as Portugal. Furthermore, the sudden booming of industries in sectors such as tourism has been observed in the Portuguese context, but seldom provides rural communities and their young generations sustainable job prospects (Diaz-Serrano and Nilsson 2020; Ferrão et al. 2023).

Finally, the COVID-19 crisis coincided with a deterioration of social inclusion perspectives among Portuguese young people, especially among rural young people, according to the EPSR social protection and inclusion indicators that we have selected. The risks of being in poverty or socially excluded have slowly decreased across all levels of analysis until 2019, with slight increases from 2019 to 2020. However, from 2020 to 2021, while the figures remained stable for the EU levels included in the analysis, in the Portuguese cities and rural areas, the share of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion increased very significantly. More importantly, the gap between Portuguese rural areas and cities has been growing. While these results must be interpreted with caution because they are not age-specific and they still highlight an alarming trend. Moreover, and while reports are very inconsistent for the past decade, it is important to mention that self-reported unmet medical care among young people has been increasing in Portuguese rural areas since 2019 and has clearly exceeded the rates for EU levels and Portuguese cities. The mounting risks of social exclusion for younger rural generations in Portugal cannot be disassociated from the overall functional dismantling of public services across Portuguese rural areas. Young people's social inclusion is threatened by the lack of infrastructure and lower coverage of their educational, employment, social and health needs. As we have mentioned before, this dilapidation of public services capacity has been politically justified by low demand from populations and is evident not only in the education and healthcare sectors but also in the local administration (Ferrão et al. 2023; Mauritti et al. 2022). The side effects of this political orientation come in the form of worst levels of quality of life, regions' incapacity to attract and retain younger generations, especially the most educated and innovative ones, and worrisome levels of mistrust in institutions (Simões 2022).

3.5.1 Implications for Research and Policy

Our analysis indicates that Portuguese rural young people are struggling more than their counterparts in Portuguese cities, EU rural areas and EU cities, especially in terms of employment and social inclusion. However, we believe our efforts constitute a mere overview of the impact of COVID-19 for young people living in vulnerable regions. Rural areas are very diverse across Portugal and EU countries, ranging from mountain areas to islands and outermost archipelagos or inlands in border regions. This variety of territorial realities shapes young people's choices in terms of education, employment or mobility in very different ways. Therefore, using more refined spatial concepts such as the contrast between low-density and high-density will certainly add layers and detail to the discussion of how COVID-19 has impacted young people in more remote and vulnerable territories, and thus affected territorial cohesion trends at the national level.

We believe our work further adds to the claim that the subnational/regional level of analysis must be streamed into the design and implementation of youth-oriented policies (e.g. Cefalo et al. 2020). One would expect that a subnational lens would be adopted by decision-makers when defining guidelines to mitigate the COVID-19 collateral effects for young people. That is not, unfortunately, the case. Some reports (e.g. ILO 2022) clearly show that young people, as well as the most vulnerable young people groups, such as those living in peripheric areas, were often neglected by States when delivering mitigation measures. More importantly, the major EU policy instruments aimed at tackling the COVID-19 crisis effects, such as the Recovery and Resilience Framework, and more specifically the national Resilience and Recovery Plans from European Southern countries consistently overlook the need to nuance expected reforms and investments active labour market policies to the needs of different territories (Simões 2022).

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Chapter 4
Non-profit Organizations and Territorial Cohesion: The Case of Cross-Border Collaboration

Oto Potluka and Lina Schubnell

Abstract After years of harmonic and stable relationships, the EU's international relations with the neighboring countries are deteriorating (Brexit, Switzerland, and Russia). While international relations are worsening, people are still living in cross-border regions. Does it mean that relationships at the local level and territorial cohesion deteriorate? The attitudes of national governments influence the situation and the permeability of borders for civil society cooperation, but the border regions are far from the centers. According to the market and government failures theories, when the markets and public sector fail, non-profit organizations act. Civil society organizations are essential stakeholders promoting bottom-up solutions where top-down approaches work with difficulties. Based on a study of data collected in a survey among non-profit organizations at the EU borders, our research aims to answer how civil society contributes to territorial cohesion in places at the EU borders. The research found that resources used in NPOs create strong bridging social capital that leads to cross-border territorial cohesion.

Keywords Cross-border · Regional cohesion · Social capital · Non-profit organizations

4.1 Introduction

The research on philanthropy points out that it is easier for persons from homogeneous/majoritarian societies to volunteer in non-profit organizations (NPOs) or charitable giving than minorities (Bortree and Waters 2014; Rotolo and Wilson 2012). Formal volunteering within official structures of NPOs helps to interact with other

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people who might be different and recognize different values, and lead to an integration of minorities. Informal volunteering outside the formal structures (e.g., helping neighbors with shopping) can be done more selectively to people with the same values and characteristics with less intense integrative dimensions (Ruiz and Ravitch 2022).

Cross-border regions are certainly not homogeneous. However, such regions are fascinating precisely because of this feature and the variety of influences. Thus, they allow us to measure cultural and social differences and whether the research results from other (socially homogeneous) regions are valid for them. Other research also shows how important the resources that NPOs have at their disposal are to have sufficient capacities to implement their mission and participate in solving societal issues (Bowman 2011; Carmin 2010; Potluka and Medeiros 2021; Potluka et al. 2017). With resources, NPOs can fill their missions.

People in cross-border regions are more likely to interact with foreign people, companies, or NPOs. Thus, on the one hand, there exists bonding social capital (links to local and national stakeholders), but also bridging social capital (thanks to links to cross-border stakeholders) that might be less common in intra-country groups. Even though these two types of social capital are very close, they also distinguish the differences in relationships with other people. The bridging social capital is missing in cross-border regions with animosity between two nations.

NPOs play a crucial role in creating social capital. This type of organization plays an essential role in studying social capital as the size of association membership was used to indicate the existence and strength of social capital (Putnam 1993). In NPOs-like associations, people gather voluntarily, and social capital is created through socialization and the pro-social values they bring to them (Coffé and Geys 2007a, b). Still, the cross-border regions are less researched in the NPOs research and social capital. Thus, the research aims to fill this gap by studying the role of resources in NPOs when creating bonding and bridging social capital to add to cross-border territorial cohesion. In the contribution, we want to answer the question of how civil society contributes to territorial cohesion in places at the EU borders.

For the chapter, the Upper-Rhine region is an excellent case. This region includes three countries—France, Germany, and Switzerland. To investigate the role of personnel and other resources in NPOs' effect on cross-border cohesion, the research uses the concepts of bonding and bridging social capital as mediating factors. To do that, the researchers examine the relationships between NPOs within individual countries in the case of bonding social capital. For bridging social capital, we chose the attitude of these NPOs towards the NPOs that are across borders.

The chapter is organized as follows. After the introduction, the section of literature review discusses social capital in NPOs (Sect. 4.2). Then, data about NPOs from the Upper-Rhine region are introduced together with applying the structural equation model. The fourth section describes the model's results and how the theories frame these results. The final section concludes.

4.2 Literature Review

Social Capital and Territorial Cohesion

Social capital reflexes relationships among people and appears where people meet each other (van Deth et al., 2016). It helps to form identities and contributes to social and territorial cohesion (Medeiros 2016). Territories can also frame social cohesion. In such a case, the literature speaks about functional areas, especially where intense socio-economic relations lead to the economic exchange of sharing ideas among stakeholders (Böhme et al. 2011, p. 48). Such an exchange is a typical feature of societies with high social capital.

The existence of social capital is essential for any cohesion, including the territorial one. Territorial cohesion and social capital are also projected in increased economic efficiency, the ability to quickly find solutions to societal and economic problems, social cohesion, and environmental sustainability (European Commission 2008, 2021; Putnam 1993). It is, therefore, understandable that territorial cohesion is of interest to geographers and regional policymakers because of its connection to the efficiency and effectiveness of resources allocated.

In the creation of social capital, interactions among people are crucial. At the local level, the contacts are usually easier to establish due to the same legal norms, same language, and direct access (Medeiros 2015). When the case concerns contacts among homogeneous groups, it usually covers bonding social capital that helps cohesion within a group. In cross-border regions, interactions with different groups across the border can build bridging social capital (Boehnke et al. 2015).

This issue of creating social capital is very crucial in cross-border regions. These regions suffer from various barriers. Due to the borders, these regions witness a lack of homogeneity, coherence, and connections (Lundén 2018, p. 99). In the extreme cases, it can be also hostility between the two regions across the border. The text of the chapter does not cover regions where trust among groups across the border is missing. The administrative barriers connected to the different legal systems hinder the development of cross-border regions (Medeiros et al. 2022). Moreover, differences in languages, access, and uneven development are the major obstacles to cross-border territorial cohesion (Medeiros et al. 2022). Without trust, there is no social capital, whatever type it is.

In the literature, the effects of territorial cohesion are evaluated from the perspective of efficiency, identities, or quality of life (Medeiros 2016). It relates to the shortage of resources like energy, land use, or other natural resources. From the socio-economic perspective, it covers competitiveness, transport issues (Medeiros 2016), and the question of how the territory is attractive for work and especially living and how it attracts newcomers (Potluka and Fanta 2021). Combining all these aspects creates a territorial identity (Medeiros 2016), making the cross-border regions an interesting but sensitive case. Identities are usually linked to nationalities, legal systems, and languages that create barriers among people and can be misused for political aims (see, e.g., Roll 2010).

Social capital is perceived as a combination of a set of values. Among them, trust, shared norms, and mutual support are the most important (Coffé and Geys 2007a; Kneidinger 2010, p. 25; Putnam 1993). As Coffé and Geys (2007a) point out, membership in a voluntary association increases the sense of interdependence with other people in an association based on common interests. It has the effect that the members behave in a somehow coordinated way. In such a network, through interactions, social capital is created.

For NPOs and the creation of social capital, it is advantageous that people gather voluntarily and provide the organizations and other members with the resources needed. It concerns especially volunteer work, networks, and contacts (Reiser 2010). For example, charitable giving is also positively evaluated, but personal interaction is missing. Social capital, thus, emerges from civil society through personal contacts (Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung 2022; Reiser 2010; van Deth et al. 2016).

Volunteering and networks allow NPOs to be rooted in society with strong connections to people and other organizations. An advantage for individual people is that they can be empowered and profit from tight connections (Ruiz and Ravitch 2022). Also, here, the requirement for sharing visions, resources, and dialogue and communication is crucial as in other fields of local and regional development (Potluka 2021; Sotarauta et al. 2017). Societies disposing of high levels of volunteering can cope with social problems better than societies where volunteering and social capital are missing (Hollenstein 2013, p. 46).

The studies on EU cross-border relations mainly concerned culturally different countries or countries with different historical developments. Particularly in the case of Central and Eastern European countries, studies have focused on the previously impenetrable borders and the bridging social capital that needed to be built, as it was almost entirely missing. It is actually not the case of the region of our interest—the Upper-Rhine region that experienced peaceful development since the end of WWII.

Upper-Rhine Region

The Upper-Rhine region (Northwestern Switzerland; Baden and Southern Palatinate in Germany, and Alsace in France) is specific by its historical development. Ownership of Alsace changed several times between France and Germany during history. This region represents a cross-border territory that could function as a model for other regions due to its long tradition of regional integration (Graf 2020, p. 132). At this place, it is necessary to point out the lower general engagement of the French population in both active solving local issues and international engagement in comparison to Germans (Boehnke et al. 2015). On the other side, the same author also refers to the equal interest in transnational engagement and social trust in both population groups—the French and the German.

France and Germany are members of the EU, while Switzerland is not. Though there was a referendum on accession to the EU rejecting the direct membership, Switzerland adopted a bilateral approach to the EU, enabling keeping sovereignty on what laws are in force in Switzerland. It does not hinder a tight integration between the EU and Switzerland. For example, Switzerland is part of the Schengen area enabling free movement across borders. Thus, economic collaboration and cultural exchange are enormous in the Upper-Rhine region (see below the number of people commuting to work in foreign countries in this region).

The population of the Upper-Rhine region is about 6.2 million in an area of 1 526 km^2 (valid for the year 2018). Of these inhabitants, 3.2 million are employees. Among them, 97,000 people commute to work in neighboring countries. Though the distribution of these commuting inhabitants is uneven (61% of them from Alsace and 38% from Baden), it shows the importance of the cross-border economic exchange in the region. It also shows that Northwest Switzerland is a target destination for the commuting workforce as it is the wealthiest part of the region (see the comparison of GDP per capita in 2017: EUR 45,492 for the whole region, while EUR 72,5493 for Northwest Switzerland; EUR 41,115 for Baden in Germany; and EUR 31,722 in Alsace in France (Statistische Ämter am Oberrhein 2020).

4.3 Data and Methods

Survey Data

Data from a survey is the primary data source. The survey concerned the NPOs in the Upper-Rhine valley from the end of February to mid of April 2022. As the region is in three states (France, Germany, and Switzerland) and two language areas (French and German), two language versions of the survey were prepared and distributed to the respondents. French and German are commonly spoken in Switzerland's part of the Upper-Rhine region. Distribution of the links to the survey was done to randomly selected NPOs in all three countries. In Table 4.1, you can find some overviews of the size of the population of NPOs in the Upper-Rhine valley.

This region is specific concerning the size of the NPOs sector in the region. This shows a high presence of social capital according to Putnam´s definition (Putnam 1993). For example, the city of Basel has the highest density of foundations per capita in Switzerland (Eckhardt et al. 2015).

To contact NPOs to take part in the survey, their contacts had to be found on the internet. The issue in contacting NPOs is that the Swiss associations do not need registration. Information for only those Swiss associations registered in the business

Table 4.1 Number of NPOs registered in the Upper-Rhine region

	Switzerland	Germany	France
Registered foundations	2,859	479	26,218
Registered associations	1,319	40,409	
Contacted organizations	495	362	442

Source Alsace Mouvement Associatif (2022), Bundesverband Deutscher Stiftungen (2022), Common register portal (2022), Data-Asso (2022), Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft Zentraler Firmenindex (2022), Statistische Ämter am Oberrhein (2020) register is available in the register. This number is lower than the existing associations in the Swiss part of the Upper-Rhine. Moreover, the number of German associations also covers Mannheim and Lake Constance organizations that are distant from the Upper-Rhine region. Contacts to particular NPOs were found online on the website of the organizations. It resulted in 631 organizations participating in the survey, but not only 58 of them filled out the complete survey and answered all questions. The number of responses to variables varies from 113 to 244 for the question with the highest response rate (see Annex 1). For that purpose, reports of the tests consistently report the sample size when statistical estimations are presented.

The questions in the survey were designed according to the literature on territory and identity, partnership and cooperation, and cross-border cooperation (Perkhofer et al., 2016, pp. 161–162). The list of questions used in the models is in Annex 1, explaining the latent constructs.

Methods

To test the causality in the introduced model, the partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was applied (Khandker et al., 2010). This method became popular in third-sector research and NPOs (Hengevoss and von Schnurbein 2022; Hersberger-Langloh et al. 2020; Son and Wilson 2011, 2012). It can help reveal causal links even when another variable mediates the relationship between two other variables. It makes the estimations more robust than applying standard ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions.

To test the relationship among resources in NPOs and bonding and bridging social capital and their effects on cross-border cohesion, the research applied partial least square approach (PLS-SEM). The model is described in Fig. 4.1, while particular items defining constructs are in Annex 1 and Table 4.2.

This model defines the latent constructs displayed in Fig. 4.1 as listed in Annex 1 (the initial composition of latent variables by items) and Table 4.2 (the

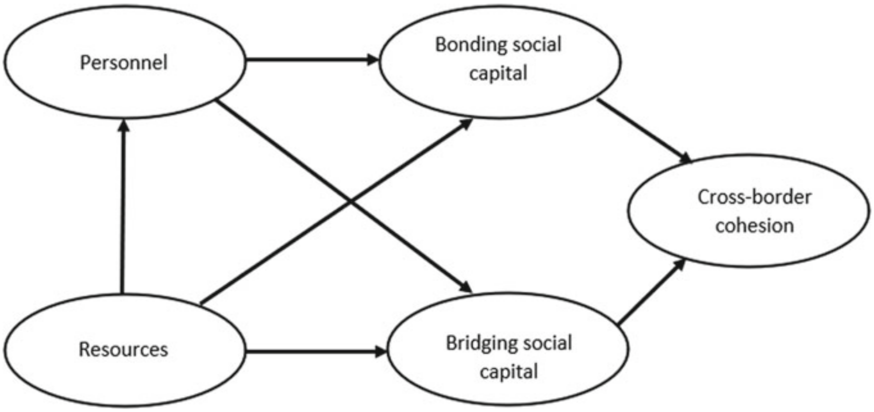

Fig. 4.1 Tested model. *Source* Own elaboration

Table 4.2 Items used in constructs

	Personnel resources	Resources	Bonding social capital	Bridging social capital	Cross-border cohesion
Workforce size	0.653				
Providing HR to partners	0.740				
Receiving HR from partners	0.652				
Resource help from partners		0.758			
Resources for local collaboration		0.503			
Resources for cross-border collaboration		0.720			
Cooperation in the home country			0.866		
Benefits from home country partners			0.785		
Exchange with partners in the home country			0.877		
Value of local partners			0.603		
Value of state partners			0.664		
Cooperation across borders				0.827	
Benefits from cross-border collaboration				0.832	
Exchange across borders				0.870	
Value of international partners				0.752	
Orientation to cross-border cohesion				0.763	
Cooperation across border					0.906

(continued)

Table 4.2 (continued)

	Personnel resources	Resources	Bonding social capital	Bridging social capital	Cross-border cohesion
Exchange across borders					0.916
Cronbach	0.429	0.422	0.821	0.870	0.795
DG	0.723	0.703	0.875	0.905	0.907
rho_A	0.430	0.421	0.854	0.892	0.796

Source own elaboration. Notice: All loadings are at a p-value below 0.01

resulting composition where some items were erased from the latent variables) following the Hair et al. (2014); or Mehmetoglu and Venturini (2021) methodological approach. The arrows in Fig. 4.1 always describe cause–effect relationship between two latent variables.

To estimate the direct and indirect effects of the resources and social capital on cross-border cohesion, the *plssem* package in STATA 17 SE applied (Venturini and Mehmetoglu 2019). This package works with the data as follows. First, it standardizes the variables used as items to estimate latent variables. Then it applies bootstrapping to estimate latent variables' scores. In the research, bootstrapping by applying 1,000 iterations was used. The higher iterations did not change the estimations significantly. Third, the method applied the imputation of missing values (means were used) as not all respondents answered all questions in the survey. Fourth, the package estimates the measures of the model parameters (weights/loadings). Fifth, the regression analysis (OLS) estimates the coefficients that are of our interest.

For the analysis, personnel resources as a separate category was applied because they are a particular resource not easily substitutable by other types of resources.

4.4 Results and Discussion

Measurement Model

The model was constructed as described in Annex 1. Item reliability was assessed throughout factor loadings. Only those statistically significant items at a 1% significance level were used in the model (you can see the difference in the models when comparing Annex 1 and Table 4.2). The reliability of the model was tested by Cronbach Alpha and DG rho. The relative Goodness of fit is 0.806.

Table 4.2 shows that the Cronbach Alpha for latent variables is above the recommended 0.7 for bonding and bridging social capital and cross-border cohesion. The reliability should be higher in the case of the personnel resources and resources in general. We have decided to leave these constructs in the model as they belong to the variables of the interest of this study.

Table 4.3 Structural model—standardized path coefficients

	Personnel resources	Bonding social capital	Bridging social capital	Cross-border cohesion
Personnel resources		0.091 (0.187)	−0.038 (0.609)	
Resources	0.181 (0.018)	0.408 (0.000)	0.383 (0.000)	
Bonding social capital				0.046 (0.116)
Bridging social capital				0.916 (0.000)
r2_a	0.031	0.185	0.140	0.870

Source own elaboration. Notice: p-values in parentheses

The structural model tests and shows that bridging social capital is important for cross-border cohesion. This finding is an understandable conclusion confirming existing theories explaining the roles of bonding and bridging social capital in territorial cohesion (Boehnke et al., 2015; Mirwaldt, 2012). The fact that in border areas, there is less homogeneity in society, makes the role of bridging social capital crucial for social and territorial cohesion. In our case, the estimation comes out strongly positive (+0.916) and statistically significant (p-value, 0.000) for the bridging social capital (for more details, see Table 4.3). Bonding social capital also has a positive effect (+0.046), but the coefficient is significantly lower than bridging social capital. Moreover, it is statistically insignificant (when the standard statistical approaches are applied).

Our analysis confirms the role of resources in developing the capacities of NPOs only for a part of our model. The expected estimation of a positive relationship between resources and personnel resources (+0.181, p-value 0.018) has been confirmed, though it is lower than could be expected. As Carmin (2010) points out, NPOs use their finances to build other types of resources to fill their mission. Estimating the link between human resources and social capital is less clear. Increasing personal resources are associated with bonding social capital (+0.091), but this association is statistically insignificant (p-value 0.187). The estimates of the effect of the personnel resources on bridging social capital is even negative (−0.038) and insignificant again (p-value 0.609).

The situation is different for other resources. The estimates are positive and statistically significant. The relationships between the resources and bonding or bridging social capital are similarly strong (+0.408 for boding social capital and +0.383 for bridging social capital). It shows that NPOs do not differentiate much between these two types of social capital. If they work with cross-border partners, they apply bridging social capital. When they work with local or national partners, they apply bonding social capital.

We explain this difference between the estimated effects by personnel and other resources by the fact that other resources (as defined in our model) are more variable

Table 4.4 Estimated direct, indirect, and total effects of latent constructs on cross-border cohesion

	Direct	Indirect	Total
Personnel resources→Bonding social capital	0.091		0.091
Personnel resources→Bridging social capital	−0.038		−0.038
Personnel resources→Cross-border cohesion		−0.031	−0.031
Resources→Personnel resources	0.181		0.181
Resources→Bonding social capital	0.408	0.016	0.424
Resources→Bridging social capital	0.383	−0.007	0.376
Resources→Cross-border cohesion		0.364	0.364
Bonding social capital→Cross-border cohesion	0.046		0.046
Bridging social capital→Cross-border cohesion	0.916		0.916

Source own elaboration

in how NPOs use them (e.g., for organizing events). Therefore, these resources can contribute more to social capital formation. Personnel resources may be limited in obligatory tasks that must be provided as mandatory activities (e.g., accounting) and cannot be used for social networking with other subjects.

Another explanation is stated by Coffé and Geys (2007a, b), who point out that social capital does not have only positive sides. They explain the role of strong bonding social capital in conflicts like in Northern Ireland, where the bonding social capital dominates within the groups over the bridging social capital. However, the bridging social capital is missing there. Generally, in such cases, there can strong social capital appear, but one of its components dominates over the second one (Tables 4.3 and 4.4).

Social capital is generally perceived as positive, but it is not always the case. As Coffé and Geys (2007a) mention, some governments see social capital as a desirable outcome of public policies. They even describe cases of attempts to increase social capital through public policies. Such a coercive creation of social capital can work only to some extent (for another case of public policy and interactions among local partners, see Potluka and Medeiros 2021). Similar cases are also the EU cross-border policies that aim at cross-border collaboration to get people to know each other (Boehnke et al. 2015), but it seems to be more reasonable as in some cases social capital was at a very low level.

Another issue concerns the two types of social capital. Although it may seem that bridging social capital is the "good" one that is desired and bonding social capital is "only" accepted, it is not quite the case. These two types of social capital are just two very interrelated parts of social capital. Moreover, attempts to create bridging social capital can lead to a loss of identities and harm a cultural heritage and resulting in loss of bonding social capital.

Resources have a positive direct effect on bridging social capital but a negative when they mediate through other variables. One explanation for the Upper-Rhine region can be that people concentrate on local issues and less on cross-border collaboration. The data from the survey shows that only about 5.5% of NPOs feel a sense of belonging to the Upper-Rhine region (cross-border), and about 39.5% feel the sense of both the local partners and the Upper-Rhine region. The majority of NPOs concentrate on local and national partners. This comparison underlines existing bridging social capital in the Upper-Rhine region. However, the level of bridging social capital is lower than that of bonding social capital. Although bridging social capital has a crucial effect on cross-border cohesion, such cohesion is not a primary goal of NPOs that took part in the survey.

4.5 Conclusions

The presented study did research among NPOs in the Upper-Rhine region at the borders of Germany, France, and Switzerland, intending to answer the question of how civil society contributes to territorial cohesion in places at the EU borders and how resources help in attempts to create social capital.

By testing relationships among personnel resources and resources generally in NPOs, the creation of bonding and bridging social capital, and their relationship to cross-border territorial cohesion, the research concludes that resources have a positive role in creating social capital. Moreover, the results confirmed the positive role of bridging social capital on cross-border territorial cohesion. Resources in NPOs are a critical factor in both bonding and bridging social capital formation. The estimations have not proved (but also not rejected) this link for human resources.

Bridging social capital is crucial for cross-border territorial cohesion. Bonding social capital also has a positive effect on cross-border territorial cohesion. Nevertheless, it is relatively low in comparison to the estimated effects of bridging social capital.

On the other side, most of the NPOs in the Upper-Rhine region concentrate on their local and national clients. Thus, bonding social capital exists and is more substantial than bridging social capital. The analysis also confirms that resources contribute equally to the formation of both bonding and bridging social capital.

We are aware of the limits of our study. First, in our survey, the respondents answered the questions representing a particular NPO, but they could fill the questionnaire with their subjective personal attitudes. If other members of an NPO have different opinions, there is no chance to find such differences in the questionnaire, and the opinion of one person was taken as the opinion of the whole NPO. Second, the research was done through surveys. Although there was random invitation of NPOs to the survey, their participation can be biased by their willingness to participate. In such a case, getting responses from NPOs interested in international relationships and collaboration with partners from neighboring countries might bias the estimations. Their responses to our survey are more probably than those from other NPOs. The other NPOs are concentrated primarily on their local clients.

Annex 1: List of Variables and Latent Variables

Latent variable	Item	Question	Obs	Mean	Std. dev	Min	Max
Personnel resources	Workers315	How many employees does your NPO have? Categories 0–5, 6–10, 11–50, 51, and more	147	1.884	1.095	1	4
	Volunteers316	How many volunteers does your NPO have? Categories 0–5, 6–10, 11–50, 51, and more	145	2.241	1.075	1	4
	GivingHR263a	Which of the following resources does your organization bring to the partnership human resources?	169	0.805	0.398	0	1
	Receivi~273a	Which of the following resources does your organization receive from the partnership human resources?	168	0.702	0.496	0	3
Resources	Trust161a	Which of the following characteristics apply to your organization? Trust	244	0.643	0.480	0	1
	Socnetwork162a	Which of the following characteristics apply to your organization? Network of social ties	244	0.566	0.497	0	1
	Supportoth1635	Which of the following characteristics apply to your organization? Mutual support	244	0.656	0.476	0	1

(continued)

(continued)

Latent variable	Item	Question	Obs	Mean	Std. dev	Min	Max
	Volunteering164a	Which of the following characteristics apply to your organization? Voluntary commitment	244	0.615	0.488	0	1
	Norms165a	Which of the following characteristics apply to your organization? Norms	244	0.467	0.500	0	1
	Missingfunds167a	Which of the following characteristics apply to your organization? Lack of funding	244	0.262	0.441	0	1
	Missingcapacity168a	Which of the following characteristics apply to your organization? Lack of capacity	244	0.258	0.439	0	1
	Givingfinance261a	Which of the following resources does your organization bring to the partnership funding?	169	0.219	0.415	0	1
	Givingnetworks262a	Which of the following resources does your organization bring to the partnership networks?	169	0.799	0.402	0	1
	Receivfinan271a	Which of the following resources does your organization receive from the partnership funding?	168	0.256	0.438	0	1

(continued)

(continued)

Latent variable	Item	Question	Obs	Mean	Std. dev	Min	Max
	Receivnetworks272a	Which of the following resources does your organization receive from the partnership networks?	168	0.792	0.407	0	1
	Partners~282	Rank the statement that partner(s) and we complement each other in our resource endowments	159	2.969	1.229	0	5
	Resourcesf ~ 4	How are the resources available to your organization as sufficient to achieve goals at the local level?	180	2.950	1.265	0	5
	Resourcesf~5	How are the resources available to your organization as sufficient to achieve goals at the cross-border level?	113	1.912	1.418	0	5
Bonding social capital	Coopera~y21_	Rank the intensity of your cooperation(s) with partner(s) in the home country	172	3.122	1.285	0	5
	Benefitsho~21_4	Rank the intensity of the benefits generated by the intrastate partnership(s)	165	2.885	1.322	0	5
	Exchangeho~21_6	Rank the exchange and communication with domestic partner(s)	168	3.119	1.242	0	5

(continued)

(continued)

Latent variable	Item	Question	Obs	Mean	Std. dev	Min	Max
	Valuelocal~1	What is the value to your organization from collaborating with local partners?	188	3.766	1.103	1	5
	Valuestate~22_2	What is the value to your organization from collaborating with intrastate partners?	180	3.206	1.218	0	5
	Weservelocal23_2	The actions of my organization serve to strengthen local cohesion	181	3.381	1.343	0	5
	Exchangeother24a	Is there an exchange of experience with other organizations?	199	0.879	0.326	0	1
Bridging social capital	Coopera~r21_	Rank the intensity of your cooperation(s) with partner(s) in cross-border region	149	2.101	1.408	0	5
	Benefitscr~21_3	Rank the intensity of the benefits generated by the cross-border partnership(s)	139	2.122	1.472	0	5
	Exchangecr~21_5	Rank the exchange and communication with my partner(s) in the cross-border region	136	2.243	1.353	0	5
	Valueinte~22_3	What is the value to your organization from collaborating with international partners?	130	2.477	1.506	0	5
	Weservecro~2	My organization's actions serve to strengthen cross-border cohesion	128	2.328	1.608	0	5

(continued)

(continued)

Latent variable	Item	Question	Obs	Mean	Std. dev	Min	Max
	Exchangeother24a	Is there an exchange of experience with other organizations?	199	0.879	0.326	0	1
Cross-border cohesion	SensecommUpper11a	Do you feel a sense of community with your Upper Rhine regional neigbors?	631	0.033	0.180	0	1
	Coopera~r21_1	Rank the cooperation with my partner(s) in the border region	149	2.101	1.408	0	5
	Samestrweak14	Do you perceive the same strengths and weaknesses in your Upper Rhine neigbors?	259	1.564	0.497	1	2
	ComplementUpp15	In your opinion, do the organizations located in the Upper Rhine region complement each other well?	224	0.625	0.485	0	1
	Abilitytoovercome33	Is your organization able to overcome these obstacles on its own?	155	0.213	0.411	0	1
	Exchangecr~21_5	Rank the exchange and communication with my partner(s) in the cross-border region	136	2.243	1.353	0	5

Source own elaboration. *Note* The grey variables were taken out of the model and not used in the final version of the estimation, while the black ones describe the final version of the model.

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Part III
Environmental Sustainability Policies for Territorial Cohesion

Chapter 5
EU Cohesion in an Age of Environmental Breakdown: Rethinking the Territorial Agenda

Gavin Daly

Abstract There is now no doubt that the twenty-first century is being defined by the ecological and climate crisis. This is not only manifesting in increasingly severe periodic weather disasters but also pernicious creeping trends which are having profound and uneven implications on the EU territory. The latest IPCC reports are unambiguous in their warnings that the climate crisis is progressing at a pace much faster than feared and there remains only a brief window to secure a liveable future. While the EU has been to the fore at an international level in setting ambitious targets and policies, and in showing global leadership, the rhetoric continues not to be matched by action on the ground which corresponds to the scale and urgency of the task at hand. Indeed, much of the language of cohesion policy continues the incremental ecological modernisation technocracy of the past which has failed to deliver the rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented systemic changes in all aspects of society required to avert the worst consequences of global heating, many of which are now irreversible. Despite soothing sustainability discourses, the exit from fossil fuels and adaptation to a warming world will not be a smooth process and is likely to result in increasingly variegated spatial inequalities and instabilities, severely testing EU political solidarity as it is buffeted by an unfamiliar, complex array of endogenous and exogenous risks. Applying a critical political-economy perspective, this chapter will unpack the immanent contradictions ensconced within cohesion policy which, it will be argued, perpetuates the status quo and prohibits it from making meaningful contribution to rapidly addressing the environmental problematique, and presents the case for why a radical epistemological and ontological shift from a 'place-based' to an 'adaptation-based' territorial development paradigm is imperative for the European project to safely navigate the perilous transformation to a post-carbon world, and for achieving effective policy action in practice.

Keywords Cohesion · Ecology · Crisis · Unsustainability · Adaptation

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5.1 Introduction

There is really no longer much point in sugar-coating it. Humanity's planetary future is bleak. New and damning reports are published every day, or almost every day, and all confirm the same catastrophic diagnosis. As I write, the World Wildlife Fund has just published its latest Living Planet Report 2022 which details how global wildlife populations have plummeted by a staggering 69% on average since 1970, putting every species on Earth at risk of extinction—including us (WWF 2022). This is a terrifying statistic, or at least it should be, and we know averages conceal the true graveness. We're told that only urgent, radical and transformational change—rapid game-changing, system-wide shifts—can head off our double existential climate and biodiversity emergencies, requiring nothing less than, 'fundamental changes to how society functions, including changes to underlying values, world-views, ideologies, social structures, political and economic systems, and power relationships' (IPCC 2022, n.p). 'We had our chance to make incremental changes', warned Inger Andersen, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme at the launch of their latest report on pitiful progress on climate action, 'but that time is over. Only a root-and-branch transformation of our economies and societies can save us from accelerating climate disaster' (UNEP 2022, n.p).

But yet, like the proverbial boiling frog, we seem powerless to act, trapped within the torpor of our current unsustainability regime. It is no longer hyperbole to suggest that it seems easier to imagine the end of the world than acting rationally to rescue our common home from the abyss (Jameson 2003). Words like 'emergency', 'catastrophe', 'breakdown', 'last chance' and 'code red' roll off policymakers' tongues with such frequency that they have lost all meaning, resulting in a certain normalisation of the environmental crisis (Swyngedouw 2010b). We are now beset by a wicked, intersectional polycrisis from climate and biodiversity to energy, housing, refugees, food, economy, politics and latterly, tragically, war. Fifty years after the famous Club of Rome's Limits to Growth study—junked by mainstream economics—projected that a business-as-usual scenario would result in a collapse in global socioecological systems by the mid-twenty-first century, this prescient forecast now appears to be playing out in real time (Turner 2014). Our much-vaunted faith in 'sustainability' to deliver us from our self-imperilment seems to offer little more than a symbolic, palliative politics—a rhetorical performance of seriousness—to sustain what would otherwise be immediately recognised as unsustainable (Blühdorn 2007). As Serge Latouche writes, it is like: 'We are in a performance car that has no driver, no reverse gear and no brakes and it is going to slam into the limitations of the planet. We are in fact well aware of what is happening… we cannot pretend that we do not know' (Latouche 2010, p. 2).

Despite our grim prognosis, there also seems little point being paralysed by fatalism. The question, even at this late hour, is what we can do about it? During the COVID-19 pandemic we saw how radically societal attitudes could shift when faced with a clear and present danger. It was in these moments of crisis disorientation that entirely unimaginable policies, which were hitherto unthinkable, suddenly became inevitable, albeit fleetingly (Varvarousis 2019). However, unlike the immediacy of the pandemic, our planetary emergency is not always fully perceptible to our senses which makes it difficult for policy actors to refract their responses against the backdrop of short-term political exigencies (Morton 2013). Instead, like the gathering, creeping normalcy of past human civilisation collapses (see, Diamond 2004; Tainter 1990), our twenty-first-century human predicament presents as a 'post-normal' societal challenge, characterised by uncertainty, value contestation, high decision stakes and urgency, whereby recovery from each partial crisis induces reassuring stimuli that the problem can be durably resolved, ultimately prohibiting the necessary adaptive responses such that an irreversible ecological threshold is inevitably breached (Brook et al. 2018; Funtowicz and Ravetz 1993).

We are thus confronted with a fateful dilemma. While it is clearly untenable that humanity can continue on its present ecocidal course, fundamental change seems equally implausible (Randers 2012). Moreover, our current quandary affords us neither the time nor the wisdom to start from a blank slate. We have, at best, a decade or two to dramatically transform the global political economy. Somehow our existing governance institutions will have to be reformed from the inside. As with all dilemmas, the only way out is to rethink the assumptions that led us into it (McLaughlin 1993). And the first port of call for such rethinking is to question our most unquestionable presuppositions and unsettling the taken-for-grantedness of the institutions through which we govern ourselves (Wright 2010). As the flagship of the European Union, (territorial) cohesion policy is generally very much normatively assumed as expressive of its self-evidently progressive, redistributive purpose for reducing geographical disparities, promoting solidarity and strengthening the harmonious, balanced and efficient development of the regions in pursuit of economic and social convergence, lockstep with achieving environmental sustainability (Medeiros 2016). As a result of this undisputed consensus, it has typically not been the wont of policy practitioners or scholars to critically reflect on this commonsense interpretation (for who could be against it?). Indeed, for most scholars, with a proclivity towards ever-increasing European integration, the only question worth asking is why, despite our best laid plans, territorial imbalances continue to widen, confounding those seeking answers that could enable better achieving territorial cohesion in practice (Börzel 2018).

In this chapter, reflecting the realities of the pressing ecosystemic challenge facing us, I take a radically different tack. I will argue that aiming for territorial cohesion, as presently conceived, in our current telluric non-analogue state, or what is increasingly being labelled as the Anthropocene, is an illusory goal, incapable of offering the solutions needed for the profound societal transformation that we must now embrace, and is indeed part of the problem, systemically reproducing the values, ideologies, worldviews, social structures and power relationships of our current political and economic order driving us ever further towards ecosystem breakdown. My argument proceeds in three steps, as follows: (i) cohesion policy must be understood, not as a benign response to deterministically imbalanced spatial development patterns, but as a necessary corollary of the EU's growth-oriented policy hegemony; (ii) continued economic growth is both unlikely and irreconcilable with impending planetary boundaries, and a dangerously misguided policy goal; and (iii) to mitigate our environmental crisis, territorial development policies in the twenty-first century requires a fundamental transformation of the underlying growth-orientated epistemologies and ontologies that shape EU cohesion policy thinking. The question then becomes, can EU territorial governance be radicalised so as to rise to our contemporary conjuncture? I finish by briefly outlining some ideas for how territorial cohesion policy must rapidly shift from a ‘placed-based’ to an ‘adaption-based’ perspective in recognition of the fraught times in which we live. This leads to some critical questions, which I propose territorial cohesion policy research must urgently answer if it is to contribute to a tangible realisation of systemic change.

5.2 Withering on the Vine

One of the advantages of working in ESPON[1] is that you get to see a lot of maps! The simple virtue of maps is that, over the years, it is quite easy to observe that nothing much ever really changes. As recounted by the authors in Part I of this volume, from the original publication of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) through to the gradual emergence of territorial cohesion as a more explicit, albeit indeterminate, official policy goal during the 2000s and the subsequent adoption of three intergovernmental Territorial Agendas, the EU has mobilised very significant policy and fiscal resources, amounting to almost one-third of its total budget, in striving to achieve more balanced territorial development at both European and subnational scales. There is now extensive literature seeking to measure the effectiveness of the policy, but very little agreement (Zaucha and Böhme 2020). Certainly, Europe generally remains one of the least unequal parts of the world (Blanchet et al. 2019) and while there was some evidence of a trend towards convergence, particularly at the national scale during the hypergrowth period prior to the global financial crisis in 2008, regional disparities dramatically widened in the subsequent reversal (Monfort 2020). The Territorial Agenda 2030, for example, describes regional inequalities as now having reached a ‘critical level’, resulting in a very significant rise in anti-EU political sentiment and ultimately to what Rodríguez-Pose (2018) has coined the ‘geography of discontent’, and heretofore its denouement—Brexit.

While the counterfactual can, of course, never be fully known, and regardless of abstract academic studies seeking to quantify its impact, what is clear is that almost 30 years after metaphorical debates as to whether Europe was a ‘blue banana’ or a ‘bunch of grapes’, the dream of EU cohesion is withering on the vine (Faludi 2015). Most put this down to a failure of political-technical realisation, resulting in continuous calls for redoubled efforts as to its more resolute and perfected application. The Territorial Agenda 2030, for example, proposes that: ‘Increased concerted action at all geographical and governance levels is needed to ensure positive future perspectives for all people, communities and places in Europe’ (p. 14). Likewise,

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[1] European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion.

Rodríguez-Pose (2018) recommends that, ‘better, rather than more, place-sensitive territorial development policies are needed in order to find a solution to the problem’ (p. 2). This accords with the type of ‘place-based’ thinking that has been *de rigueur* in the field of European cohesion policy ever since the influential ‘Barca Report’ (2008) and subsequently promoted by a homophily of prominent academics as a new regional development paradigm (Barca et al. 2012). Indeed, the entire *raison d’être* of the ESPON programme is to produce evidence and knowledge in furtherance of the objectives of territorial cohesion by seeking to translate it into a more easily understood and measured policy concept at national, regional and local scales. For example, the European Territorial Reference Framework project, cited as a key input into the development of the Territorial Agenda 2030, sets out a series of renewed policy prescriptions to counter fissiparous development trends alongside an anxious plea to policymakers to urgently change course so as to ‘avoid increasing disparities driving Europe apart’ (ESPON 2019, p. 4).

This Panglossian ideal that the real challenge for realising territorial cohesion is a technocratic one is perhaps revealing of what Jessop (1998) refers to as the ‘self-reflexive irony’ of governance. That is, despite repeated experience and the strong likelihood of continued failure, academics and policymakers proceed as if success is always possible through improved institutional design, knowledge or political practice (Howlett et al. 2015). The other (un)obvious answer, of course, is that the problem is simply insoluble and predestined to failure. Is it irrational to entertain such a hypothesis? Perhaps, among what Zaucha and Böhme (2020) characterise as the ‘territorial club’ of ‘believers’ (p. 631) working in the field of European cohesion policy, such a proposition is an anathema. However, in light of the systemic transformation of governance now required, it is imperative that we too thoroughly reflect on our own reflexivity. It would certainly be remiss to single out cohesion policy as unique in this respect, as failure is always a central feature of all governance (Jessop 2009). Nevertheless, Marxist political-economy theories, studiously ignored in mainstream cohesion policy literature, have long pointed to chronically uneven geographic development patterns as fundamental to contemporary capitalist societies, arguing instead that the competitive relations of capital accumulation actively intensify and maintain spatial inequalities such that the increasing gap between more and less developed regions is structurally necessary for capital’s very evolutionary survival, generating its now ubiquitous core-periphery economic geography (Lefebvre 1976; Soja 1980; Harvey 1982). As Harvey (2014) observes:

> Without uneven geographical development and its contradictions, capital would long ago have ossified and fallen into disarray. (p. 147)

In other words, economic growth can never be a ‘win–win’ spatial process but is always ‘zero-sum’ and not only is the notion of balanced territorial development *contradictio in adjecto*, but the resulting uneven geoeconomic patterns are systematically determinate, even deliberate, as opposed to deterministic (Smith 2008). The continued failure of cohesion policy is therefore inescapable as it is, ‘the simple reality that not every place can win simultaneously, but also because winning and losing creates complex effects. Failure creates poverty and inequality among the losers, harming people and places and their capacity to compete in the future' (Nunn 2020, p. 952).

Accordingly, at the heart of cohesion policy is an unspoken Sisyphean paradox between cohesion and competitiveness which can never be durably resolved, and where there are always necessarily 'winners' and 'losers'. This is not to suggest, needless to say, that cohesion policy research and practice is not intuitively aware that some territorial disparities will always be with us, as geographical unevenness is the result of every sociospatial process. Neither is it to neglect the intense 'space-blind' *versus* 'place-based' intellectual disagreements of the past decade which have prominently seen their recrudescence in the post-Brexit United Kingdom landscape between 'levelling -up' and 'Singapore-on-Thames' (McCann and Ortega-Argilés 2021). Nevertheless, it does beg the question as to why, notwithstanding the continued experience of the very significant gap between cohesion policy's rhetoric and reality, that an assiduous commitment to the normative ideal of spatial balance continues to have such routine salience and uncritical traction among policy actors and scholars as an auspicious policy paradigm, such that 'everyone can be a winner'? (Bristow 2005).

Applying a counternormative lens, the answer appears to be twofold: one practical and the other political, but always related to the reproduction of the neoliberal market system whereby maintaining aggregate economic growth and competitiveness is *the* overriding policy priority. The first relates to the very spatial dynamics of capital accumulation itself. Within heterodox theories of uneven geographic development, while spatial concentration is absolutely essential for the reproduction of capital, it simultaneously creates parlous conditions for overaccumulation. If an economic crisis of devaluation is to be averted, countervailing forces, typically actioned through the state by way of spatial development policies and scalar restructuring, are persistently compelled to geographically circumvent and displace capital's perpetual surplus absorption problem by attempting to equalise territorial differences and secure new 'spatial fixes' through the opening up of fresh terrains for accelerated economic expansion, triggering what Smith (2008) famously refers to as the endlessly contradictory 'seesaw' dynamics of overdevelopment and underdevelopment. For example, as discussed by Davoudi (2019), the ESDP emerged to prominence during the apotheosis of the late 1990s globalising neoliberal milieu as a policy reaction to increasing centripetal spatial development patterns, reimagining the European territory as a dynamic, networked and polycentric city-regional system of decentralised agglomeration economies to achieve 'a more even geographical distribution of growth across the territory of the EU (aiming at cohesion)' (CEC 1999, p. 7), grounded within predominant market- and competition-orientated spatial logics in support of the economic imperative of single market and political integration.

At an abstract level, the underlying philosophy of the ESDP was arguably much more influential than its content, 'revealed in the way that the hegemonic status of economic knowledge shapes the concepts, frameworks and mindsets of stakeholders' (Richardson and Jensen 2000, p. 516). Over time the apparent irrefragable consensus between theory and policy around competitive city-regions has been continuously transfigured so as to maintain a clear and convincing logic to legitimate its continued existence in response to its persistent failures through an array of affiliated socio-technical spatial representations, e.g. 'second tier cities', 'functional governance', 'smart specialization', etc. This *lingua franca* exposes just how readily mainstream academia comes to frame what counts, performatively shaping the practical attention of policy communities in a strategic and persuasive way through a range of hegemonic discourses to ensure that there is no loss of pro-system meanings, instead of helping to stimulate a more open debate (Hajer and Versteeg, 2019). In fact, contrary to conventional thinking, many scholars view policy failure as central to the exploratory and experimental *modus operandi* of neoliberal spatial governance and its protean dynamics of economic and social reproduction (Brenner et al. 2010). Within this perspective, the current authority of 'place-based' thinking can be seen as just the latest metamorphosis of cohesion policy as a spatial fix to ceaselessly displace, and even capitalise upon, its own failures and to enhance aggregate economic growth by 'tapping into unused potential in intermediate and lagging areas' (Barca et al. 2012, p. 149).

This brings me to my second proposition. As discussed by Beckert (2017), fictional expectations of imagined futures are critical to the functioning of capitalism, which works only so long as we have faith in its future benefits. By transforming political conflicts over distribution into technocratic spatial management questions with apparent 'win–win' outcomes, cohesion policy provides what could be termed an 'imaginary resolution of real contradictions' and the universal promise of future capitalism, while simultaneously masking its true nature. This pre-emptively conditions regions and cities to ideologically maintain and reproduce entrepreneurial urban-spatial governance logics, where the only possible response to the failures caused by neoliberalism is a neoliberal one; in the 'delusional transformative hope' (Hassink and Gong 2019, p. 2056) of gaining a new competitive development advantage, despite the powerful path-dependent effects of pre-existing political-economic structures and spatial conditions such that it can only be achieved by a few already competitive areas. In the end, as Kunzmann (2021) suggests:

> One could argue that all the ambitious territorial cohesion policies are a means of distracting attention from the economic challenges caused by neo-liberal policies—a determinant of spatial development in European cities and regions. (p. 278)

Ironically, this corresponds with Rodríguez-Pose's analysis of the pervasive democratic alienation caused by increasing territorial polarisation in Europe and the perception of many regions of being 'left behind' which is presenting a 'serious and real challenge to the current economic and political systems' (Rodríguez-Pose 2018, p. 33). In later empirical work, Rodríguez-Pose and Dijkstra (2020) argue that in countering this insurgent trend: 'Cohesion Policy has played, and can continue to play, an important role in keeping the rise of discontent in Europe at bay and, consequently, stymying the ascent of Eurosceptic and anti-system forces' (p. 15). The system is dying, long live the system!

5.3 Don’t Look Up!

It goes without saying, and lest I be accused of being unnecessarily tendentious, that advancing cohesion and cooperation between territories is prima facie a good thing. Europe has known too much of division for it to be anything other. Nevertheless, if we are to apprehend the role that cohesion policy might play in catalysing a systemic socioecological transformation, and to expand our conceptual relevance to these policy debates, it behoves us that we first engage in a deeper introspection as to what might be the Realrationalität guiding our praxis, such that we are not even aware of the ‘darker side’ of our own role in co-constituting the existing social order (Flyvbjerg 1996; Yiftachel 1998). As Lefebvre (2003) describes it:

> Technocrats, unaware of what’s going on in their own mind and in their working concepts, profoundly misjudging in their blind field what’s going on (and what isn’t), end up meticulously organizing a repressive space. (p. 157)

Davoudi (2020) therefore instead uses the term ‘kept behind’, rather than ‘left behind’, to make it explicit that territorial inequalities are not epiphenomenal, but the very outcome of a system whereby growth, productivity and competitiveness are the sine qua non of policy. Consequently, in seeking to understand why cohesion policy fails, accounts which lack sufficient concern with underlying causation at best provide a partial explanation and, at worst, are part of the problem, simultaneously overdetermining technical reasoning while systematically depoliticising political-economic factors such that we do not even have the consciousness to think how it might be otherwise (Davidson 2019). ‘Using the metaphor of balance’, Grant (2022) therefore insists ‘naturalizes conflict and growth, masks mechanisms of power and choice, and privileges some participants and perspectives over others’ (p. 13).

In many ways, cohesion policy’s fixation with balance mirrors academic criticism of its allied sister concept for harmonious futures to come—sustainable development—which ever since the very inception of territorial cohesion has been virtuously framed as an analogous counterpart to deliver ‘win–win’ and ‘–win’ policy outcomes such that there are no losers against the so-called triple bottom line of economic, social and environmental development. The original tagline for the ESDP, for example, was ‘Towards Balanced and Sustainable Development of the Territory of the European Union’ where, as discussed by Albrechts et al. (2003), balanced development was very much the territorial expression of sustainable development, and vice versa. Indeed, the initial 2008 *Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion* suggested that ‘the concept of territorial cohesion builds bridges between economic effectiveness, social cohesion and ecological balance, putting sustainable development at the heart of policy design’ (CEC 2008, p. 3). In the subsequent two decades, there has been a preponderance of high-sounding policies all purporting to promote the achievement of sustainable development. Regardless, as we know, the development of the EU territory since then has been anything but sustainable (EEA 2019). As the saying goes, the road to hell is paved with good intentions.

It is for this reason that many scholars increasingly view sustainability as a mere simulative politics of ‘empty gestures’ that has cynically provided a sufficiently vague and slippery rhetoric, meaning everything and nothing, to conceal the continued primacy of the neoliberal growth agenda (Davidson 2010; Swyngedouw 2010a). As Rees (1999) puts it: ‘Not far below the surface in any discussion on global sustainability is a collective fear and loathing of the implications and potential consequence of taking “our common future” and the ecological crisis seriously’ (p. 356). As the term has been gradually emptied of its original environmental meaning, it has become the subject of a radically diverse set of interpretations, ceasing to be about any one particular concern but instead achieving a harmonious compromise between seemingly irreconcilable political objectives (Brown 2015). This allows actors of all hues, united by a shared misunderstanding as to what it actually means, to speak with enthusiasm of progressive socioecological change in ways that are decisively non-threatening to the systemic *status quo*, resulting in ‘only marginal reforms when the problem demands fundamental change’ (Rees 2003, p. 30).

For Gunder and Hillier (2009), the absence of a specific meaning is not a flaw but, in fact, inherent to sustainability’s very ideological power as a tactical medium to co-opt and incorporate democratic resistance, papering over its immanent tensions and foreclosing serious questions as to why it persistently fails. As a result, there is no sense of real alternatives and subjects of all kinds unthinkingly co-construct the sustained inevitability of economic growth as the taken-for-granted foundational basis for regulatory action (Keil 2009). Indeed, the discourse of sustainability has now become so ubiquitously commonsensical in mainstream cohesion policy so as to be almost beyond the requirement for any serious justification, effortlessly reaffirming its fetishised, benign traction among policy communities as the basic starting point for policy analysis and debates (Luke 2005). We can see this polysemy again repeated, for example, in the latest tranche of post-2020 EU cohesion policies, ‘Next-Generation EU’ and the centrepiece of the COVID-19 recovery plan, ‘The European Green Deal’, intended as ‘a new growth strategy that aims to transform the EU into a fair and prosperous society, with a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy where there are no net emissions of greenhouse gases in 2050 and where economic growth is decoupled from resource use’ (CEC 2019, p. 2).

The recent return to prominence of the concept of ‘resilience’—popular in the immediate aftermath of the global financial crisis but which subsequently faded from policy consciousness (Davoudi 2012)—and the establishment of the ‘Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)’ offer a further case in point for how the mutability of cohesion policy’s core concepts offers an extremely convenient means to relentlessly depoliticise past failures by repackaging their shortcomings in new neutral and technical terms (Allmendinger 2016; Peck 2010). As reported by Böhme et al. (2022), in contrast to ‘build back better’ which had been the mantra throughout the pandemic, ‘programme authorities designing new strategies are adopting a “back to normality” approach’ (p. 7) whereby the opportunity to create new development models based on alternative logics has been foregone. This contrasts with a ‘bounce forward’ systems interpretation of resilience, favoured by the European Commission’s Joint Research Centre as ‘a new compass for EU policies’, where shocks and crises offer a window of opportunity to develop transformative capacities which include ‘cultural changes, behavioural shifts and institutional reforms’ that ‘question values, change priorities, challenge beliefs, identities, and stereotypes' (Giovannini et al. 2020, p. 6). This includes, for example, the 'Beyond GDP' initiative that represents the potential to radically shift social territorial development priorities away from growth, which EU policy has long 'endorsed' but failed to progress beyond lip service, presumably constrained by systemic political imperatives.

5.4 Existential Dilemmas

In seeking to understand the geography of EU discontent (and what to do about it), perhaps the real question we should be asking is, not whether EU territorial development policy suffers from 'space blindness', but if cohesion policy suffers from a 'power blindness' as to its own role in reproducing the systemic order and its dominant ontology of growth-fuelled sociospatial and ecological injustices, simultaneously delimiting the possibilities for alternative action. In the final analysis, what continues to stand in the way of realising real democratic, transformative change is that, no matter what the consequences, economic growth must always continue (Foster and Clark 2012). Of course, within the prevailing ecomodernist zeitgeist of EU policy there is no contradiction between growth and resource use, and that 'green growth' and a transition to a 'circular economy' which is 'systemic, deep and transformative' (CEC 2020, p. 19) can be achieved at a rate sufficient to prevent ecological overshoot and collapse through continued techno-scientific innovation and efficiencies. Unfortunately, empirical evidence of the thermodynamic feat that a growing economy can be made circular is unsurprisingly lacking, placing implausible expectations on absolute efficiency gains (Haberl et al. 2020). As described by Beck (2009), environmental risk cannot be averted by 'more and better' science—'it is the product of more and better science' (p. 115, italics in original).

The bottom line is that the ecological crisis has its roots in the overconsumption of natural resources by endless growth and must be addressed, not just by improving the efficiency of our economy, but its sufficiency (Klein 2020). The main takeaway from each and every major scientific report over the past decade, and more, has been that, 'our current trajectories are fundamentally unsustainable; these trajectories are interconnected and linked to our main systems of production and consumption and time is running out to come up with credible responses to bend this trend' (EEA 2019, p. 3). Marginal and incremental improvements in relative energy and carbon efficiencies that keep these systems intact will simply not suffice. We know from lived experience that as the GDP growth rate approaches zero, absolute decoupling becomes more feasible (Schröder and Storm 2020). Still, we appear determined to continuously 'fail forward' with ever more 'fantasmatic narratives' (Telleria and Garcia-Arias 2022) intended to conceal the conflicts, tensions and contradictions of business-as-usual, or what Foster (2014) refers to as 'implicative denial', where the facts and interpretation of the ecological crisis are readily accepted but the policy implications of what would logically follow are suppressed in an attempt to vouchsafe continued competitiveness, productivity and growth. As Bernes (2019) describes:

'The problem with the Green New Deal is that it promises to change everything while keeping everything the same' (n.p.).

In many ways this is understandable. Growth is not an optional feature of capitalist economies, it's a systemic imperative. If the economy stops growing, everything falls apart, which is why most policymakers fear recession far more than ecological collapse. We are stuck in a double bind. Paradoxically, even the massive fiscal investments included in The European Green Deal in an attempt to decarbonise society are entirely dependent on growth to pay for them. However, we also know that the future of economic growth is highly uncertain. Many scholars have observed that we are now in an era of 'secular stagnation' where profitable investment opportunities to fuel continuing economic expansion are becoming more difficult to find—a malaise which is even more acute in Europe due to ongoing demographic decline (Jackson 2019). Mitigating climate change in our current psychosocial gestalt therefore means relying on a system that is entirely dependent on growth, but increasingly unable to deliver it (Copley 2022). Attempts to breathe new life into the system, through initiatives like 'green/smart/inclusive/sustainable growth' (or whatever your current preferred adjective is), are likely to be further stymied by the accelerating absence of a stable climate and the decreased availability of fossil fuels, alongside ongoing ecosystem degradation, natural resource depletion, pollution and public health crises, resulting in new and variegated forms of popular reaction and sociospatial antagonisms (Schmelzer et al. 2022).

The territorial distribution of these crises will also be highly uneven. A recent report by the World Meteorological Organization concluded that temperatures in Europe over the past 30 years have increased at more than twice the global average at a rate of about +0.5 °C per decade, the highest of any continent in the world, and regardless of future levels of global warming, temperatures will rise at a rate exceeding global mean temperature changes (WMO 2022). Peripheral regions with higher vulnerability and reduced adaptive capacity are being hit first and hardest, and, for much of Europe's population, life is set to become increasingly precarious (Cantergiani et al. 2020; Dyer 2010). For example, similar to the summer of 2022, a significant summer precipitation decrease is projected to continue in southern Europe extending to northern regions, alongside exceptional heat, wildfires, desertification, floods, retreating ice and snow, vector-borne diseases, pandemics and mental health issues. Adaptation also means that we will have to come to terms with the impossibility of continued material, social and political progress as a universal promise, posing major challenges for conventional ethical thinking (Schröder and Storm 2020). The political consequences of this for EU cohesion are hard to predict but we do know this—the stability of our system is based on endless economic expansion and there are few signs that it can peacefully contract (Kallis 2017).

5.5 Decelerating Cohesion

Future pathways in the Anthropocene will therefore amount, first and foremost, to an ontological upheaval and a radical reorganisation of sociopolitical life, where many long-standing canonical assumptions will be invalidated, particularly hidebound preoccupations with economic growth (Gosling and Case 2013). It certainly cannot be ruled out that the consequence of deteriorating physical environments, greater economic insecurity and growing regional inequalities, exacerbated by mounting exogenous geopolitical risks and mass migrations, will tend towards neo-feudalism, autocracy and the possibility of a steep social decline (Nachtwey et al. 2018). Our current model of ‘place-based’ cohesion policy that structures intense intra-regional competition and binds development trajectories to economic expansion is wholly unsuited to this future, simultaneously depleting and destabilising our life supporting biosphere (Savini 2021). Changing course will require a radical political transformation towards an ‘adaptation-based’ development paradigm that reconceives urban regions as self-renewing, symbiotic and autonomous spaces of deceleration, regeneration and redistribution so as ‘not to conduct cosmetic ecology on a grand scale but to actually assure viability in the future’ (Beck 1997, p. 61).

Given limited space, I could not hope to summarise in detail the mounting body of radical thinking emerging from academic and activist fringes prefiguring alternative visions of a positive future world. However, I will just briefly dwell on two key facets: one epistemological and the other ontological, which I believe are essential to this systemic transition. Firstly, as I have alluded to above, far from lacking impact in the real world of policymaking, influential academics and transnational research networks, ‘policy peddlers and gurus’ (Peck and Theodore 2010, p. 170), play a pivotal role in the transmission chain of specific closed forms of pro-system knowledge from academe to policy, socialising actors into accepting certain hegemonic ideas such that they are ‘blind to the more subtle mechanisms at work in political power’ (Grange 2014, p. 56). For scholars to become aware of their potentialities as important agents of transformative policy change, rather than in support of the *status quo*, requires engaging in radical defamiliarisation that is reflexively open to unorthodox thinking as a means to unsettling our own preanalytical dispositions towards the dull compulsion of conformist epistemologies, and to become aware that what was normal before is now irrational (Hornborg 2001). This includes critically deconstructing our most basic concepts, hiding in plain sight and which we all too readily accept at face value as ‘natural’ and ‘good’, such as ‘balanced’ and ‘sustainable’ development, through which the systemic order is furtively maintained (but which can never be either balanced or sustainable), simultaneously foreclosing more radical anti-system approaches to territorial development from emerging as rational alternatives.

Secondly, cohesion policy must urgently abandon the functional polycentrism of ‘place-based’ thinking underpinned by the veiled ethics of profit-orientated market competitiveness, which Krugman (1994) once famously described as a ‘dangerous obsession’ among policymakers, instead rapidly transitioning to a bioethical world-view of self-reliant regions corresponding to the scale of underlying biogeographical realities in ways that prioritise locality, autonomy and conviviality over efficiency, expansion and profits (Cato 2011). Underpinned by the principles of deep democracy, a bioregional conception of territorial development offers a potentially progressive contribution towards an overall communitarian environmental ethic of scale that seeks to ‘Think Global, Act Local’ through cultivating an ecotopian philosophy, or new cultural sensibility, that challenges every aspect of our present-day value systems and the norms and policies of the institutions that shape our daily lives (Church 2014; Rees 2017). This not only necessitates a dramatic adjustment in policymakers’ attitudes towards nature, but also changes in how territorial boundaries are drawn, systems of production, consumption patterns, and institutions and decision-making processes no longer focused on economic growth so as to ‘decentralize, restore bioregional forms of production and food cultivation, diversify our technologies, scale them down to human dimensions, and establish face-to-face forms of democracy’ (Bookchin 1980, p. 27).

This should not be confused with balkanised autarky or environmental determinism. Instead it can be more aptly thought of as a fully networked, or multipolar, confederation of relocalised municipalities organised with a high degree of material and political self-sufficiency as an antidote to our contemporary metabolic rift, where globalised identities are so deeply estranged from the self-jeopardising environmental effects of human action. Fostering such regionally adapted cultures which emphasise the integration of people, environment and livelihood as a form of human ‘reinhabitation’, in both geographical terrains and terrains of consciousness, can unite people in enacting an ontological shift in their material relationship to both human and nonhuman life, beyond their evaluation as mere commodities (Lockyer and Veteto 2013). Importantly, in terms of cohesion policy, it offers the potential to transcend the spectre of disintegration haunting Europe in which citizens identify in historical, cultural and material terms with their unique features of place and are challenged to become totally invested in its long-term evolution, based on collective self-interest, symbiotic conservation and genuinely participatory forms of civic action—a real ‘Europe of the Regions’ where in the prophetic words of Sicco Mansholt, former president of the European Commission and among the early cast of utopian integrationists, what matters is not economic growth, but the growth of culture, happiness and well-being (Mansholt 1972).

5.6 Conclusion

‘We are on a highway to climate hell with our foot on the accelerator’, so said António Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General, in his opening address to the recent COP 27 climate summit, in pronouncements which are becoming increasingly hopeless. The future does indeed look bleak but we can still have hope, if now little optimism (Eagleton 2015). However, to bring about the systemic transformation needed to at least mitigate the worst impacts of the unfolding calamity, we first need a political revolution to undiscipline ourselves in progressive new cultural directions and to emancipate conceptual spaces for reimagining far-reaching alternatives (Blühdorn 2004). And the starting point for theorising such transformative action must always be to problematise the present situation so as to identify the ways in which existing social institutions and structures systematically impose harms on people and planet (Wright 2010). Accordingly, for Beck (1998), ‘key to combating destruction of the environment is not found in the environment itself, nor in a different individual morality or in different research or business ethics; by nature it lies in the regulatory systems of the institutions that are historically questionable’ (p. 26).

This brings me back to the Territorial Agenda 2030 which, once more into the breach, is the latest call for a renewed policy emphasis on the need to tackle deepening spatial and ecological injustices for the achievement of a ‘just’ and ‘green’ Europe. While ostensibly a welcome shift in discourse, a study by Henriques et al. (2020) concluded that it suffers from the self-same conceptual vagueness as past efforts alongside an absence of a critical interrogation as to why those efforts failed, leaving it, once more, all too easily hijacked to promote neoliberal models of spatial development and simply unable to live up to its progressive aims (Olesen 2014). As discussed by Davoudi (2020), without such a re-politicised semiotic reflection and ‘a clear and explicit expression of the values that underpin its priorities, this Territorial Agenda risks following its predecessors’ limited leverage on Cohesion Policy and its approach to tackling spatial inequalities’ (p. 5). Surely, at this stage, we are aware that these iniquitous pathologies cannot be overcome by policy while leaving in situ the neoliberal market system? At what point do ask whether we are unwittingly ignoring our own role in reproducing the existing systemic order, driving civilisation ever further towards the dismal outcome of ecosystemic collapse? Are we condemned to forever stand on ceremony while obsequiously ignoring those insurgent voices experimenting with radically alternative counterpractices from outside the acceptable firmament of mainstream policy discourses? Seeking answers to these questions is the courage of the intellect that Kaika and Swyngedouw (2014) insist, ‘is now required more than ever, a courage that takes us beyond the impotent confines of a sustainability discourse that leaves the existing combined and uneven, but decidedly urbanized, socio-ecological dynamics fundamentally intact, and charts new politicized avenues for producing a new common urbanity’ (n.p.). In effect, the objective of territorial cohesion policy for the coming decades must be to try to achieve a ‘prosperous way down’—by design, not disaster (Odum and Odum 2001).

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Chapter 6
Sustainable Urbanisation for Territorial Cohesion. A Multi-scalar Perspective

Giancarlo Cotella

Abstract Despite the growing recognition of the limited nature of land, the demand to develop it continues to rise, leading to urbanisation models that are often unsustainable. This conundrum is acknowledged by the EU in its Urban Agenda that, through the partnership on *Sustainable Use of Land and Nature-based Solutions*, explicitly links it to the objective of territorial cohesion. At the same time, it led to the development of an increasing number of initiatives in European cities and regions, aiming at a more sustainable urbanisation. Building on the results of the research project ESPON SUPER, the chapter reflects on these initiatives from a multi-scalar perspective. It discusses the rich set of practices surveyed in the project from the EU to the local level, focusing on their scope and on the types of instruments they employed. Whereas, on the one hand, the analysis suggests that a large and heterogeneous set of interventions exists in Europe, aiming at a more sustainable urbanisation; on the other hand, it also highlights that no one-size-fits-all solution exists to achieve this goal. Effective multi-level governance across territorial levels and administrative boundaries is necessary to align policies towards a more sustainable urbanisation and, in turn, territorial cohesion.

Keywords Territorial cohesion · Sustainable urbanisation · EU Urban Agenda · Multi-level governance · ESPON

6.1 Introduction

Land is a limited resource and only its sustainable use guarantees its function in the production of food and raw materials, the protection of biodiversity, the storage of carbon emissions, as well as the hosting of human development and infrastructure (Foley et al. 2005; Eglin et al. 2010). However, demand for developing land continues to rise, driven by new lifestyles that require more space per capita, as well as by competition between local authorities to attract new developments, leading to

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urbanisation models that are often unsustainable (Rydin 1995; Dong et al. 2019). For almost 40 years now, the political attention to urbanisation processes and the possible measures to be adopted in order to orient them towards a more sustainable direction has grown significantly (Nivola 1999; Couch et al. 2008). This has strongly influenced the main documents addressing sustainable development at the global and European levels, as clearly witnessed by the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the recent European Union (EU) 'Territorial Agenda 2030—A future for all places' (respectively, United Nations 2015 and CEC 2020a).

Through time, the challenge of sustainable urbanisation has also taken on an increasingly central focus in EU policies. In particular, the EU Urban Agenda, through its partnership on Sustainable Use of Land and Nature-based Solutions, explicitly links sustainable urbanisation to the objective of territorial cohesion. The indication of the European Commission to reach 'No net land take by 2050' (CEC 2016a, b), reinforced in its contents by the so-called 'European Green Deal', confirms this trend, clearly pointing out that the interventions put in place at all territorial level to address and steer territorial development dynamics should be pivoted around the overarching goal to achieve more sustainable urbanisation.

Building on the evidence collected in the framework of the research project ESPON SUPER (ESPON 2020a),[1] the chapter argues that no one-size-fits-all solution exists to achieve sustainable urbanisation and that multi-level governance across territorial levels and administrative borders, strategic and regulative planning and programming, and an integrated and participatory approach may all contribute to a policy alignment fostering more sustainable urbanisation and, in turn, territorial cohesion. More in detail, it discusses the heterogeneous set of practices surveyed by the project, to present the main solutions that have been put in place to this end at the various territorial levels, and the lessons can be learnt from them. After this introduction, Sect. 6.2 briefly reflects on how European urbanisation has been changing in the last two decades, as a consequence of a multitude of drivers, among which the heterogeneous set of interventions put in place at the different territorial levels to promote and steer territorial development. The relations linking territorial cohesion and sustainable urbanisation are further detailed in Sect. 6.3, drawing on the contents of the EU Urban Agenda and on other relevant supranational policy documents. Section 6.4 constitutes the core of the paper, drawing on the ESPON SUPER results to discuss the responses put in place to address urbanisation dynamics in a more sustainable way from a multi-level perspective. Here the impact of EU regulations, policies and strategies is presented, before shifting the focus of the analysis to the interventions put in place at the national and subnational levels. A final section rounds off the contribution, summarising the main messages of the chapter and delivering a number of conclusive remarks.

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[1] The ESPON project SUPER (Sustainable Urbanisation and Land-use practices in European Regions) was run in the period 2018–2020, by a research team coordinated by the Dutch Environmental Agency and composed of BBSR (Germany), Politecnico di Torino (Italy), OIR (Austria), University of Valencia (Spain), University of Warsaw (Poland) and Urbanex (Croatia). All the materials and results produced by the project are available at https://www.espon.eu/super.

6.2 European Urbanisation and Sustainability

Drawing on the data provided by the Copernicus Land Monitoring Service,[2] the ESPON SUPER research team has recently developed a thorough analysis of the evolution of urbanisation processes in the European countries and regions in the period 2000–2018 (ESPON 2020b).[3] According to the analysed data, during this period, around 2.87 million hectares of land changed land-use category, of which almost half (1.26 million), concerned a conversion to urban land. Of this change, 35% became urban fabric (predominantly residential), 37% industrial (including business parks, shopping centres and offices), 17% infrastructure and 11% urban green (Fig. 6.1). Urban development mainly occurred on agricultural land (78%) and, to a minor extent, at the expense of terrestrial nature. As a result, artificial land cover increased from 19.2 million to 22.6 million hectares.

The content and pace of urban land conversion varied widely in Europe, clearly indicating how land-use changes seem closely tied to socioeconomic and political developments (Fig. 6.2).[4] Given their heterogeneity, it is challenging to assess the identified urbanisation trends in sustainability terms. Following the consideration included in the SUPER Main Report (ESPON 2020a: 19–35) we can argue that, from an economic perspective, the transformation of land towards economically more productive uses is an important driver of land-use change. The analysed data show that the largest share of land put to economic use regards agriculture, and covers 43% of the total land mass studied (although national figures range from 75% in Denmark to 3% in Iceland). Industrial land use covers a much lower proportion of land and, even in areas where the proportion of artificial land use is relatively high, commercial/industrial land cover is typically less than 2% of the total NUTS 3 surface area (but typically 10–25% of urban land use).

When it comes to the social dimension of sustainability, land-use changes related to residential areas are relevant for the provision of enough housing that fits people's preferences and budgets. Urban and suburban development is driven and counterbalanced by household income and developments of rents, interest rates, and land

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[2] Copernicus is the EU's Earth observation programme, offering information services that draw from satellite Earth Observation and in situ data. The European Commission manages the Programme that is implemented in partnership with the Member States, the European Space Agency, the European Organisation for the Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites, the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts and Mercator Océan (https://www.copernicus.eu/en).

[3] The analysis draws on the Corine Land Cover (CLC) and CHA datasets collected by Copernicus that enables the monitoring of land use with a reasonable level of accuracy (minimal mapping units of 25 ha and 5 ha, respectively). To perform analyses combining information on land-use change with its potential drivers, the SUPER research team combined into a single database socioeconomic, environmental and land-cover data. As far as possible, all data was collected at or converted into NUTS 3 (2016 boundaries) for the four Corine Land Cover measurement years (2000, 2006, 2012 and 2018).

[4] For example, far less land changed function in the years following the 2008 financial crisis, especially in those countries and regions where the latter stroke more severely, e.g. Southern Europe (Cotella et al. 2016b; Tulumello et al. 2020).

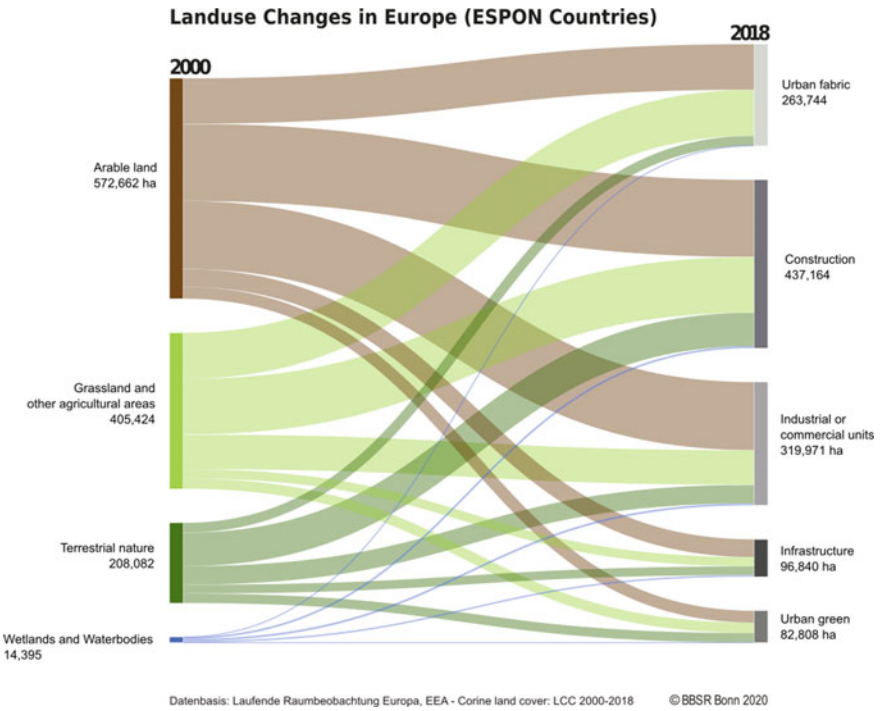

Fig. 6.1 Changes to urban land use in the ESPON territory in the 2000–2018 period. (*Source* ESPON 2020a: 20)

and house prices. According to the SUPER research team, the analysis of the development of cities and their environs shows that, in many countries, the pressure of population growth has reached the suburbs and the development of prices followed suit, potentially indicating a socially unbalanced movement to the inner-suburbs and an increased pressure on inner-city property. This particularly affects parts of the population depending on affordable housing. Furthermore, this could spur urban development beyond the suburbs (ESPON 2020a: 35). Finally, concerning the environmental dimension of sustainability, it is important to stress that urbanisation in Europe has decelerated through time, as a computation for the 1990–2006 period resulted in a figure of 275 ha per day, a much higher value than today's 177 ha per day (Prokop et al. 2011), also as a consequence of the growing number of areas in which land-use change is either forbidden or subject to severe limitations. Whether or not the current rate is sustainable is however debatable (Cotella et al. 2020). On the one hand, it would be rash to label the entirety of the detected transformation as unsustainable 'land take', as environmental sustainability should pertain to

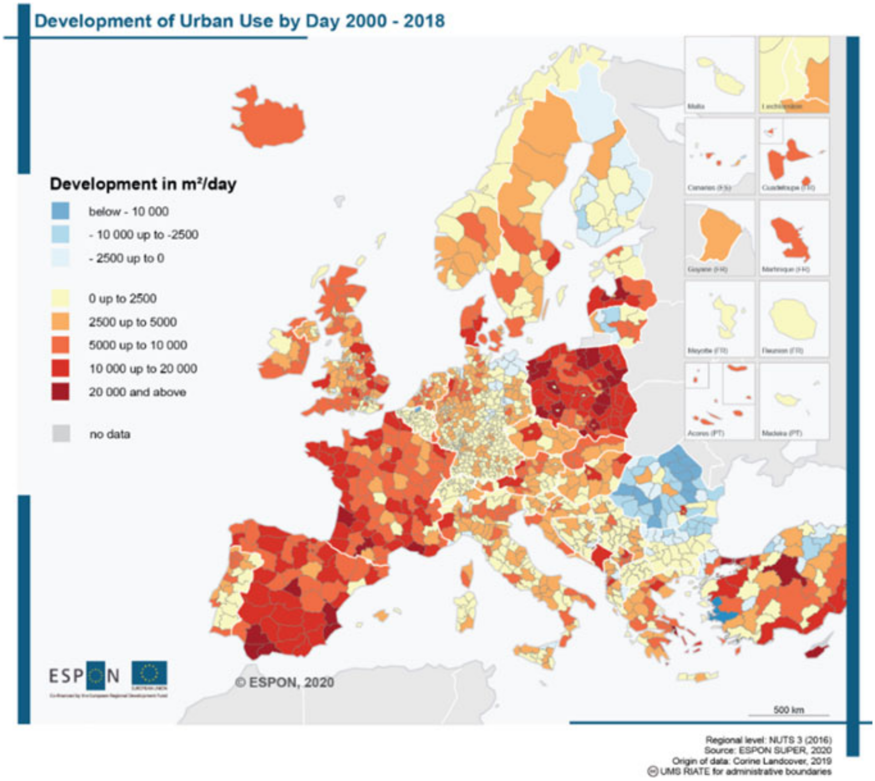
Development of Urban Use by Day 2000 - 2018
Development in m²/day
below - 10 000
- 10 000 up to -2500
- 2500 up to 0
0 up to 2500
2500 up to 5000
5000 up to 10 000
10 000 up to 20 000
20 000 and above
no data
ESPON
© ESPON, 2020
Malta
Liechtenstein
Canarias (ES)
Guadeloupe (FR)
Guyane (FR)
Martinique (FR)
Mayotte (FR)
Réunion (FR)
Acores (PT)
Madeira (PT)
500 km
Regional level: NUTS 3 (2016)
Source: ESPON SUPER, 2020
Origin of data: Corine Landcover, 2019
© UMS RIATE for administrative boundaries

Fig. 6.2 Daily rate of urbanisation in the 2000–2018 period. (*Source* ESPON 2020a: 22)

how land is being used beyond carrying capacity.[5] On the other hand, however, raw land consumption has been increasingly considered among the main indicators of the degree of sustainability of development processes, due to its major impact on biodiversity decline in the world, habitat loss and fragmentation, pollution and CO^2 emissions (Krauss et al. 2010; Pereira et al. 2010; Seto et al. 2012; Eglin et al. 2010; Foley et al. 2005).

In order to shed some light on this issue, it is interesting to reflect not only on land consumption patterns, but on the causes that determine them. In this concern, a meta-analysis of the related scientific literature developed in the framework of the ESPON SUPER project detected a growing awareness that land consumption is not an autonomous phenomenon but the outcome of a collective choice (Buitelaar and Leinfelder 2020; Moroni and Minola 2019) that depends on multiple, often interrelated variables, whose weight and influence on urbanisation varies widely from context to context (Colsaet et al. 2018). Among the different factors that may concur to explain land consumption, especially population and income growth are widely studied drivers that are most often found to increase land take (Colsaet et al. 2018). At the same time, political and institutional factors are also extensively mentioned in the literature, suggesting that land consumption is not a mere result of 'market forces' but is largely shaped though public policies: while weak or inadequate planning is said to increase land consumption, specific instrument and devices (e.g. infrastructure pricing and subsidies for urban renewal) may have the opposite effect (Dembski 2020; Halleux et al. 2012; Millward 2006; Solly et al. 2020, 2021). This seems to point to a relation between the sustainability of urbanisation trends and the policies and actions put in place at the different levels to promote and steer territorial development and, in more general terms, between the goals of sustainable urbanisation and territorial cohesion.

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[5] For example, the sustainability of agriculture versus urban is constellated by a number of complex issues pertaining to the availability of habitat for flora and fauna, use of pesticides, displacement of livelihoods when intensification is required to retain profitability, etc.

6.3 Sustainable Urbanisation and Territorial Cohesion

Territorial Cohesion was formally introduced by the Treaty of Lisbon in 2007, to argue that citizens, wherever they live and work, should have adequate access to public services, housing, job opportunities, etc. It complements the economic and social dimensions of the EU cohesion objective and, aiming at a balanced and sustainable territorial development across EU regions and cities, provides further substance to the spatial agenda that had implicitly characterised the EU since the beginning of the integration process, to then becoming more and more explicit in the 1990s following the ratification of the Single European Act (Faludi 2011; Cotella 2019, 2020).

Positioning within this broader spatial agenda, the Urban Agenda for the EU was launched by the Pact of Amsterdam, as a multi-level governance initiative aiming at engaging EU, national, regional, and local actors in the joint development of innovative solutions to major urbanisation challenges (CEC 2016a). By promoting a more sustainable urbanisation through improvements of policies, strategic frameworks, guidelines, funding, increased cooperation, etc., the Urban Agenda de facto features territorial cohesion at its core, as aptly recognised by the deputy director general for Implementation in the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy at the European Commission (Popens 2021). Beyond the specific theme that each of the 14 partnerships are dealing with, they all put in great consideration the cross-cutting issues of governance across administrative borders and sound and strategic spatial planning, in so doing explicitly aiming at the further alignment of the policies and actions undertaken at the different territorial levels and, in turn, at establishing synergies between the goals of sustainable urbanisation and the overall territorial cohesion of the continent (CEC 2016a).

After almost 6 years, a total of 132 actions have been produced, ranging from guidance documents to new governance structures, with examples of policy recommendations as well as proposals for indicators and data. Some actions contributed to easing cities' access to funding by developing guidelines for EU funding programmes, some aimed at establishing permanent mechanisms to facilitate the exchange of ideas, projects, and practices related to EU initiatives that require local expertise, and others developed actions that aim to influence the development of EU legislation. Overall, through the work of its partnerships, the Urban Agenda for the EU sought to create opportunities for improving solutions on the ground, to trigger sustainable urbanisation via concrete implementation solutions and to promote actions providing sustainable and integrated development keeping in mind the ultimate goal of territorial cohesion.

In the programming period 2021–2027, the European Commission has further strengthened policy coordination and coherence, to establish complementarities and to build on synergies aimed at the same time at territorial cohesion and at a more sustainable urbanisation. The indication to reach 'No net land take by 2050' (CEC 2016b) has been confirmed in its contents by the 'European Green Deal' upon which the new EU cohesion policy is based, clearly pointing out that the interventions put in place at all territorial level to address and steer territorial development dynamics in a more cohesive way should also take into account the sustainability of urbanisation processes. With the New Leipzig Charter (CEC 2020b) and its implementing document, adopted by EU Member States in November 2020, the Urban Agenda for the EU has at its disposition solid principles and grounds to continue to deploy, to involve cities and citizens, and to create solutions for supporting urban development and territorial cohesion across the EU (Popens 2021).

Despite the energy dedicated to the promotion of a more sustainable urbanisation at the supranational level, however, one should recall that the thematic interests of many of the EU Urban Agenda partnership, among which those of the partnership directly focusing on Sustainable Use of Land and Nature-based Solutions, do not fall directly within the competences of EU and, due to an unresolved competence clash that dates back to the 1990s (Faludi 2008), Member States remains fully responsible for determining policy and practice in the area of spatial governance and planning (Janin Rivolin and Faludi 2005; Cotella et al. 2021). This means that this Partnership (as well as others) deals with many common issues that are identified and experienced throughout Europe, but which are managed in different ways according to national and subnational institutional and legislative frameworks and related policies (Berisha et al. 2021). In this light, in order to reflect on how the objectives of sustainable urbanisation may be achieved in practice and contribute to territorial cohesion, a multi-scalar perspective is needed that draws on the various instruments and actions put in place at the different territorial levels to identify promising solutions as well as warnings on how to avoid the pitfalls that disseminate the way.

6.4 Towards a More Sustainable Urbanisation? A Multi-scalar Perspective

Acknowledging that only through a multi-scalar policy approach it may be possible to orient European urbanisation dynamics towards a more sustainable direction and, in so doing, to contribute to the EU objective of economic, social and territorial cohesion, this section draws on the rich database of interventions compiled in the framework of the ESPON SUPER project (ESPON 2020c; Cotella et al. 2020) to present the reader with a set of examples of how, around Europe, policy and decision-makers active at the different territorial levels are engaging with the task. After a brief presentation of the methods that have been employed in the data collection process, the following subsections will, respectively, present and discuss relevant policies and actions put in place at the EU, national and subnational levels.

6.4.1 Data Collection Methodology

The empirical material upon which this chapter is based has been collected in the context of the ESPON SUPER project (ESPON 2020c). In particular, it derives from two different but complementary activities. On the one hand, the identification of those EU actions that may have a positive or negative impact on the urbanisation dynamics that characterise its countries and regions. On the other hand, the cataloguing of a large amount of interventions put in place at different territorial levels in the different European countries, with the aim to achieve a more sustainable urbanisation.

To explore the impact of EU policies on urbanisation and land use 59 policies were identified as relevant through desk research and a survey involving the member of the ESPON SUPER research team. These were transferred to a comprehensive data matrix, and factsheets were created for each of them, classifying them by type of instrument and according to how they could potentially impact urbanisation and land use with respect to sustainability.[6]

In order to collect sustainable urbanisation and land-use practices from all European countries, a preliminary list of interventions was first compiled on the basis of the knowledge and experience of the SUPER consortium partners and then complemented through an ad hoc online survey disseminated to experts from a number of pan-European organisations (AESOP, ESPON, ISOCARP, ECTP-CEU). Finally, the database was complemented and enriched through a thorough analysis of the scientific literature (e.g. articles, international research reports, national laws and regulations), in order to fill as much as possible geographical and information gaps.

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[6] All factsheets are available on the ESPON SUPER website (ESPON 2020c: 96–155).

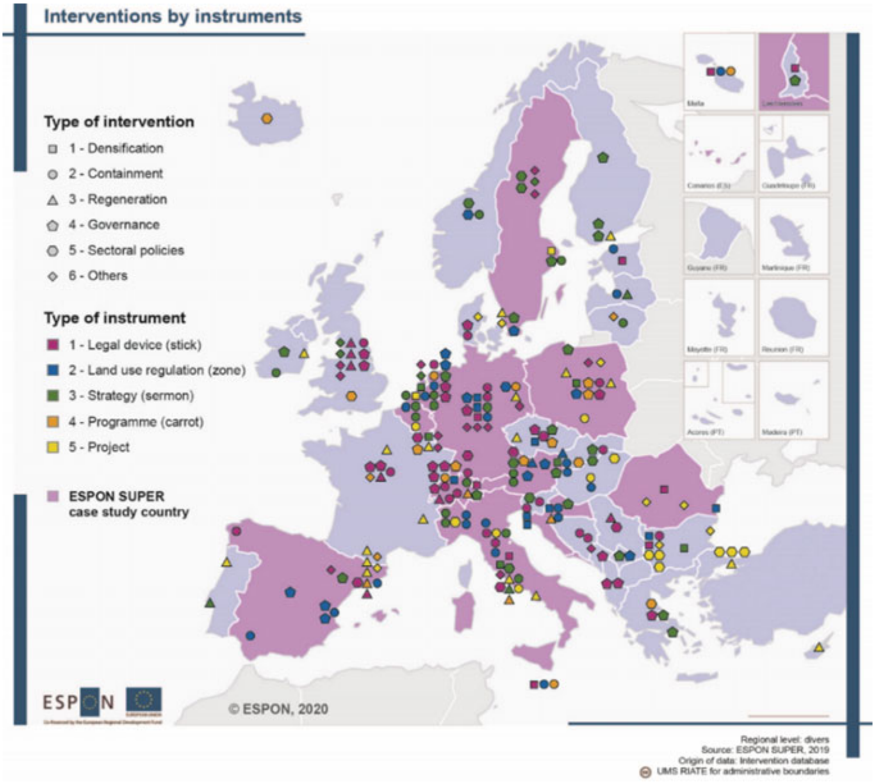
Interventions by instruments
Type of intervention
1 - Densification
2 - Containment
3 - Regeneration
4 - Governance
5 - Sectoral policies
6 - Others
Type of instrument
1 - Legal device (stick)
2 - Land use regulation (zone)
3 - Strategy (sermon)
4 - Programme (carrot)
5 - Project
ESPON SUPER case study country
Malta
Liechtenstein
Canarias (ES)
Guadeloupe (FR)
Guyane (FR)
Martinique (FR)
Mayotte (FR)
Réunion (FR)
Açores (PT)
Madeira (PT)
ESPON
© ESPON, 2020
Regional level: divers
Source: ESPON SUPER, 2019
Origin of data: Intervention database
UMS RIATE for administrative boundaries

Fig. 6.3 Interventions collected and analysed in the SUPER project. (*Source* ESPON 2020c: 7)

Following these steps, a total of 235 interventions have been identified, compiled into a database and further classified according to various categories and analytical fields (Fig. 6.3).

6.4.2 *The EU Approach to Sustainable Urbanisation*

Despite the lack of an explicit spatial planning competence, the EU does exert some influence on territorial development and urbanisation processes, usually as a by-product of activities such as sectoral policies, legislation, incentives as well as via overarching agendas. Recently, a more direct role is being played by the mentioned EU Urban Agenda, through its Partnership on Sustainable Land Use and Nature-Based Solutions. Overall, it is possible to make a general distinction regarding the way EU policies affect spatial planning and territorial development in the Member States (Evers and Tennekes 2016; Cotella 2020), by distinguishing between: (1) those that impose rules to sanction unwanted behaviour (); (2) those that provide incentives, for example subsidies, to encourage desired behaviour (Cotella and Dabrowski 2021) and (3) those that attempt to persuade by means of providing information, creating forums for discussion, and convincing argumentation (Adams et al. 2011a).

A total of 21 EU legislation elements were identified with some sort of direct or indirect impact on the sustainability of urbanisation dynamics. The most relevant are the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive (2011/92/EU) and the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (2001/42/EC). The former requires Member States to ensure that public and private projects which are likely to have significant direct and indirect effects on the environment to undergo an obligatory assessment of the potential environmental impacts.[7] The latter establishes environmental assessment for plans and programmes that are likely to impact on the environment (e.g. in the fields of transport, telecommunications, energy, waste treatments, industry, tourism, etc.), setting a number of criteria related to the characteristics of potentially affected areas, including the irreversibility of effects, intensive land use, the effects on areas or landscapes with protection status.

Also the Natura 2000 directive (92/43/EC) operates in the field of environmental protection and does not concern land or soil per se. Nevertheless, it affects urbanisation both directly (by prohibiting development in protected areas) and indirectly (by restricting developments elsewhere which could undermine habitats), as it calls for land-use planning and development policies to recognise and respect environmental considerations with regard to fauna and flora habitats. Other EU environmental legislations that have an impact towards more sustainable urbanisation dynamics are the Birds Directive (2009/147/EC), setting an obligation to reserve certain areas for protected bird habitats, thus closing off these areas for any possible development, the Floods Directive (2007/60/EC), calling for the introduction of flood risk concerns into planning and land-use policies and pointing at increasing human settlements, soil sealing, land cover and intensive land use among possible causes aggravating flood risks, therefore calling to address these issues, the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC), targeting through planning requirements specific land uses which are directly impacting waters and establishing river basin management plans and flood risk management plans.

When it comes to the wide range of funding programmes promoted by the EU, the lion's share is taken by the European Structural Investment Funds (ESIF). The Cohesion Policy 2021–27 programming period focuses on five investment priorities, of which Objective 2 'a greener, low-carbon Europe' and Objective 5 'a Europe closer to citizens' are most relevant in relation to sustainable urbanisation.[8] The EU Regulation 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council, which operates under the ESIF framework and lays down the rules applicable to the various funds, explicitly argues that one of the objectives to be supported with funding aims at preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency, hence potentially leading to projects directly related to sustainable urbanisation and a more efficient use of land. When it comes to the various funds, sustainable urban development is an explicit objective within the European Regional Development Funds Regulation, and translates in support to efficient land use for urbanisation through a number of investment priorities with related issues, such as revitalisation of cities, regeneration and decontamination of brownfield, protecting and restoring biodiversity and soil and promoting ecosystem services and green infrastructure. Also the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development Regulation contains propositions regarding land, which might be adjacent to prospective urbanisation sites and hence can restrict urban expansion. This has an impact on urbanisation mainly via its actions in the field of rural development, as regarding competing land uses (agricultural versus urban), support of rural areas as opposed to concentrated urbanisation or provision of subsidies for maintaining certain land uses. A more indirect, but perhaps more significant long-term impact of the policy is seen in subsidies and payments for farmers and land managers to sustain certain land uses, in turn, aiming at counteracting the profitability of converting agriculture land for urban development.

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[7] The most relevant projects are those for infrastructure development, as they include direct land take, but also have the potential to spur further urbanisation.

[8] In particular, Objective 2 implements the Paris agreement, with a focus on energy transition, renewable energy and climate change measures, while Objective 5 supports local development strategies and sustainable urban development throughout the EU.

Also some direct initiatives may have an influence on urbanisation dynamics. Interreg programmes, for instance, have an indirect impact on urbanisation and related land-use practices and address some of the big challenges of sustainable development (such as issues related to environmental protection or encouraging sustainable development). The URBACT III expressed support for polycentric urban structures, small- and medium-sized cities, and urban–rural linkages, explicitly calling for coordinated policies for urban renewal and control of urban sprawl. Furthermore, as the overall aim of the programme is to support integrated sustainable urban development, various projects implemented under its funding are expected to contribute in varied ways towards sustainable urbanisation, *inter alia* integrating transport planning and land-use planning, promoting brownfield redevelopment, green infrastructure, urban soil management, etc.

Finally, the EU may have an impact on urbanisation dynamics through its strategies and guidance documents. For instance, numerous urban development policies are declaring their commitment to fulfil the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy (CEC 2010), with the latter that has a rather strong, although indirect impact on the general direction of urban development towards a more integrated and sustainable growth. Moreover, the document explicitly suggests measures related to the improvement of land management, enhancing knowledge-based innovative approaches to it, or to cut off environmentally harmful subsidies. Measures focusing on a more efficient use of resources (among which land) are outlined in the EU flagship initiative ‘Resource efficient Europe’, and one of the Strategy’s targets focuses on climate change and energy, pushing towards greenhouse gas emissions 20% lower than 1990 levels, 20% of energy coming from renewables and 20% increase in energy efficiency,[9] all objectives that directly impact urbanisation and related land-use practices. Among the strategies promoted by the EU, the most relevant for urbanisation matters is certainly the already mentioned Urban Agenda that includes the sustainable use of land as one of its priority themes. More in particular, the Urban Agenda is aimed at promoting integrated sustainable urbanisation across the continent, well-balanced territorial development, to be achieved through better governance and urban and regional planning. In so doing, it addresses small- and medium-sized urban areas as well as larger Functional Urban Area (FUA) with recommendations for sustainable land use that should be directly implemented in Member States' spatial planning systems. Despite their relevant focus, the non-binding character of these documents also represents their weakness, and even if they may generate a strong indirect impact in form of awareness-raising and good practices diffusion, this impact is highly dependent on the willingness of national and subnational actors to assume responsibility and to adopt their own strategies and policies on the subject.

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[9] For an overview of the EU Energy Policy frameworks see Cotella et al. (2016a, b).

6.4.3 National Perspectives

When it comes to the interventions put in place by national governments around Europe to foster sustainable urbanisation processes, they most often take the shape of strategies and visions, legal devices, programmes and subsidies.

More in detail, several strategies and visions setting out guidelines to be taken into consideration at the regional and local levels have produced positive results. In Italy, for example, the 2015 *National Strategy for Climate change adaptation*,, a policy framework that addresses climate change adaptation issues for both natural systems and socioeconomic sectors addresses issues of soil protection and hydrogeological instability (e.g. landslides, floods and coastal erosion) as well as soil degradation and desertification connected to climate change (Ministero dell'Ambiente e della Tutela del Territorio e del Mare 2014). In Norway, the *National Policy Guidelines for coordinated land use and transport planning* put pressure on municipalities to steer development towards existing urban areas instead of urban expansion, and each local authority is expected to follow the national guidelines as part of the multi-level cooperation process within the country's planning hierarchy (Falleth and Saglie 2011). One clearly successful strategy is the *zero-growth goal for car traffic* applied in Norway since 2018, aiming to increase public and non-motorised transport in the coming decades. The goal is supported by the National Transport Plans, which implies that the strategy is part of a wider transport policy that, in the long run, also aims at conspicuously reducing urban sprawl. In the Netherlands, the *Red for green* national strategy has been instituted to improve the quality of rural areas, such as landscape and recreational areas (referred to as 'green') by using the revenues that derive from urban developments, such as housing, commercial and industrial development (referred to as 'red') (Wolff and Spaans 2010). Finally, Luxemburg's National Infill Programme (*Nationales Baulückenprogramm*) adopted in 2014 a particularly ambitious goal, aiming at identifying suitable lots and to make landowners aware of how these could contribute to satisfying the demand for housing, in so doing promoting densification and urbanisation containment (Ministère du Logement 2018).[10]

Given the scarce coercive power of visions and strategies, various countries have opted for the introduction of legal devices, directly or indirectly aiming at making urbanisation more sustainable. Particularly interesting is the *Zero Net Artificialisation* Law adopted in France, aiming to limit the consumption of forest, natural and agricultural spaces, through the long-term goal of zero net artificialisation by 2030 and shorter term initiatives such as returning 5,500 hectares to nature per year (UNAM 2019). To this end, it mobilises both regulatory and fiscal tools: imposing a minimum land-use coefficient for urban renewal projects and adding an artificialisation levy to the development tax, whose revenues are used to finance soil renaturation and densification of built-up areas. Additional norms concern specific types of activities, as tourism or commerce. The Swiss *Weber Law*, for instance, puts strict limits on second homes and includes sanctions for non-compliance: in practice, no new building permits have been granted in municipalities where limits have been reached (including almost all Swiss ski-resort communities). A similar legal device has been introduced in Croatia, where the Physical Planning Act designates *Protected Coastal Area* zones to which severe building restrictions apply (Vidan 2014).[11] On the other hand, the United Kingdom *planning policy guidance—PPG6* aimed to concentrate retail development in non-car-dependent areas (e.g. existing town and city centres), providing instructions to local planners to bear this in mind when making decisions on planning permission (Hillier 2004). Since 1997, via an amendment to its spatial planning act, Denmark also placed restrictions on the construction of large shops and shopping centres on greenfield sites outside the largest cities and favoured the development of small retail spaces in small- and medium-sized towns. The *brownfield target* in England is a prime example of limiting urban expansion through legal measures aimed at infill development. It dictates that at least 60% of new housing must be built on brownfield land by 2008. Another interesting example of a national legal rule to promote densification is the 2018 decision, in Malta, to allow the construction of additional floors at second and third floor levels, overriding local plan provisions. Interestingly, the German government sets the ambitious goal of reducing annual land consumption to 30 hectares per day nationwide (Kotter 2018). To reach the so-called *30 hectares target*, two additional instruments were launched: the land take reduction action plan and the land certificate trading scheme. Even though many agree that the target is not realistic, its existence is helping to promote long-term containment measures and, consequently, reduced soil consumption.

Programmes and subsidies have also been put in place to pro-actively contribute to sustainable urbanisation by promoting institutional coordination mechanisms, financing spatial transformation (i.e. projects), establishing behavioural incentives and/or subsidising specific initiatives. Two examples are the cases of the Swiss *Impuls Innenentwicklung* and of the *Swiss Agglomeration Programmes*. The former obliges communities to shift their spatial development to dense urban areas and to coordinate any extension of building zones beyond municipal boundaries. The latter seeks to optimise local initiatives using an agglomeration approach, enabling municipal agglomerations to better harmonise their transportation, urban development and land-use plans and to thereby avail themselves of federal programmes for funding transportation-related infrastructure projects. Since 2011, around 40 agglomerations throughout Switzerland are actively participating to these programmes, demonstrating their importance as well as arguing for an overall need for better spatial integration and coordination. Economic programmes can also be used for the rehabilitation of peripheral areas of cities, as is expected from the Italian programmes *Piano Periferie 1* and *2*, running since 2015. These aim to recover abandoned and deprived areas by investing in environmental and social as well as economic sustainability. To date, the programme has allocated over 4 billion EUR to the improvement of the cities' peripheries by prioritising urban requalification and regeneration of abandoned areas.

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[10] The lack of financial incentives or legal requirements to put pressure on the owners, however, makes the effectiveness and impact of this measure uncertain and mostly depending on the will of the private landowners.

[11] The rule contains restrictions on building outside of settlement borders, regulates terms and conditions of further spreading of the settlements, protects sensitive areas.

6.4.4 Regional and Local Interventions

Besides the action of national government, a wide range of options are available for local and regional policymakers to promote sustainable urbanisation. More in detail, this objective is sought for around Europe through the adoption of a variety of instruments: visions and strategies, legal devices and land-use regulations, programmes and projects.

Based on the evidence collected in the SUPER project, one of the characteristics of successful visions and strategies is establishing ambitious, future-oriented, realistic objectives. Examples of a strategy introducing an ambitious target that influenced the use of land include, for instance, the *Vision Rheintal of Vorarlberg* in Austria and the *Tri-City metropolitan area planning* in Poland, both aiming at establishing a more integrated approach to urban containment by facilitating investment on e-mobility transportation, encouraging densification along public transport routes and improving intercity connections within the region (Assmann 2008). Another interesting example is *Corona Verde* in the Metropolitan Region of Turin (Italy), where 81 municipalities joined forces to promote a new and alternative vision of the territory based on the quality of the environment and quality of life (Cassatella 2013).[12] Inter-municipal cooperation can be considered as a litmus test for the ability of visions/strategies to effect change. For example, in the *Kooperationsplattform Stadtregion* Salzburg and ten surrounding communities are implementing a regional green belt using development compensation measures to guarantee equal benefits for participants. By effectively tacking interjurisdictional problems, this platform also strengthened cooperation between the municipalities and enhanced governance capacity. This can also occur in a cross-border setting, as witnessed by the ALPARC strategic plan (concerted effort to preserve valuable natural areas) and the Agglomerations Programme Werdenberg-Liechtenstein (coordinating transport and urban development across borders). When such strategic initiatives use inclusive approaches, they can broaden their base of support, which can enhance their chances of effective implementation.

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[12] The success of this strategy is demonstrated by its capacity to mobilise substantial funds for implementing short-term projects, which all fit within a wider long-term strategy.

However, the adoption and implementation of visions and strategies also face various challenges. Political will and technical capability are often undermined by social, economic and institutional contingencies. This proved the case for a number of plans for European cities, which were challenged by sustainability trade-offs, implementation difficulties and lacking institutional will and capability. For example, the *Finger Plan of Copenhagen* (2019) to promote a more efficient transport network paved the way for sacrificing valuable green areas (Olesen 2022). Similarly, the Cork Area Strategic Plan 2020 aimed to reduce the loss of agricultural land, but what in fact happened was increasing rural land consumption and overexploitation of natural resources.

Sustainable urbanisation can also be successfully addressed by instituting specific subnational legal devices, as in the cases of the laws on soil consumption produced by the Italian regions of Tuscany and Friuli Venezia Giulia that give particular attention of the environmental dimension of sustainability. While the former aims at enhancing territorial and landscape heritage and sustainable regional development, the latter seeks to reinforce the containment of land consumption, also favouring the recovery of the existing building heritage or its reuse through the conversion to different uses. Similarly, the *Vorarlberg Land Transfer Law* in Austria aims at controlling the acquisition of agricultural land by guaranteeing ‘functional continuity’ of the land, in so doing counteracting the ‘hoarding’ of building land. Also more local measures can produce successful results, as in the case of the *Poznan Metropolitan Area Planning Law*, which has the merit to introduce concepts like ‘compact city’ and the ‘energy-efficient spatial structure’. Laws can also concern the introduction of economic disincentives or compensations, as proven by examples from Austria (Development and Maintenance Fee applied in the region of Upper Austria) and Italy (doubling of urbanisation fees in Emilia Romagna). More in detail, the Emilia Romagna region decided, on the one hand, to double urbanisation fees for projects that convert agricultural land into built-up area and, on the other hand, to decrease these by at least 35% (local administrations are allowed to reduce it to 100% if necessary) for projects that rehabilitate abandoned areas.

Also binding zoning plans may be used to reduce land exploitation or to favour its more coherent use, as in the cases of the Municipal Operative Plans of Reggio Emilia and of the Union of Bassa Romagna (Italy). In both cases, the public authority decided to reduce the buildable surface by 30% and 50%, respectively, in order to guarantee a more sustainable use of land, while preventing landowners from paying higher taxes on buildable land (Cotella and Berisha 2021). Similarly, the Province of Utrecht (the Netherlands) is experimenting the de-zoning of urban functions back to agricultural via the imposed land-use plan. Even if not so common throughout Europe, those examples show the possibility to reorient land-use policies in order to reconvert buildable areas into agricultural one, something that only few years ago would have not been taken into account as a possibility. Other land-use plans instead may focus on protecting and improving existing agricultural land, while at the same time limiting metropolitan expansion, as in the cases of the *Territorial Action Plan of the Huerta de Valencia* and the *Rural Park South* in Milan. Finally, the more pro-environmental-oriented plans seem to be those aiming at reducing land use according to the European zero land take objective. In this respect, the *zero-growth plan of the municipality of Cassinetta di Lugagnano* (Italy) adopted in 2007 sets a series of economic incentives to promote industrial conversation and recovering of city centre instead of increasing land take by preserving agricultural land.

Finally, also dedicated programmes and projects can create the conditions for a more sustainable urbanisation. Throughout Europe, a number of interesting economic programmes are identifiable that have been used directly or indirectly to promote fair, equal and balanced land-use practices. The Special Infrastructural Plan that has financed the 22@Barcelona has promoted the rehabilitation of 200 hectares of industrial land of Poblenou into an innovative district offering modern spaces for the strategic concentration of intensive commercial and knowledge-based activities. From an environmental perspective, an interesting and successful example is the *Re-creation of Lake Karla in Thessaly* (Greece), which was seen as an opportunity to enhance water supply, restore the ecosystem and improve the quality of the soil that was in danger of overexploitation. Environmentally oriented is also the case of the *Enjoy Waltham Forest* programme which has delivered a series of micro-interventions like 22 km of segregated cycle lanes, improved 100 junctions, planted more than 700 trees, installed almost 300 bike hangars, etc. A more focussed sustainable programme is the *Berlin Program on Sustainable Development* that, thanks to its cross-cutting character, has financed a variety of projects dealing with energy renewal and efficiency, sustainable mobility and bike infrastructure, (re)naturalisation of areas, etc. Its success is evidenced by the amount of funds allocated (234 mil. EUR) and the number of projects (over 200).

6.5 Concluding Remarks

Land continues to be consumed throughout Europe at a pace that, despite having slowed down in comparison the 1980s and 1990s, is not yet compatible with the sustainable development of the continent. This certainly constitutes a challenge, as the EU objective of a more cohesive territory cannot be achieved without dedicating higher attention to the sustainability of ongoing urbanisation patterns. The inter-linkages between the objectives of territorial cohesion and sustainable urbanisation have been progressively made explicit by the EU strategies and policies. The EU Territorial Agenda 2030, the EU Urban Agenda and the EU Green Deal that set the framework for the present cohesion policy programming period all include reference to urbanisation and to how its dynamics should be oriented towards a more sustainable direction. This issue is also recognised globally, by the UN Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (Berisha et al. 2022).

The causes behind urbanisation are however multiple, intertwined and difficult to discern. Importantly, they often include some of the goals that have animated through time the EU agenda, such as economic growth and competitiveness (Tewdwr-Jones 2011). Once again this reveals the tensions permeating the political agenda of the EU that is at the same time aiming at the achievement of economic, social and territorial cohesion (Adams et al. 2011b). These tensions, which have proven hardly concealable at the European level (Mendez 2013; Mendez et al. 2021), need to find a case-by-case balance in the practice as, and this is the main argument brought forward in the chapter, it is the multi-level coordination of practices that determine the actual urbanisation dynamics, and they depend on the incentives, power structures and interaction of various stakeholders within an arena that is framed by the prevailing territorial governance and spatial planning system and sectoral policies in place.

Looking at this balance in the actual practices, however, reveals another level of complexity surrounding the achievement of sustainable urbanisation that is related to the multi-level distribution of territorial governance and spatial planning competences that characterise Europe and its Member States (ESPON, 2018). On the one hand, when it comes to the actions that can be put in place in favour of a more sustainable urbanisation, the EU can only act either through rather week strategies or through the attachment of specific conditions to its incentive schemes, while more coercive means granted by directives and regulations are limited to sectoral fields as the environment and energy. On the other hand, each country manages and regulates territorial development in its own way and through the actions of various administrative levels and instruments, making the individuation of a one-size-fits-all approach not only an impossible task, but a rather dull exercise. On the contrary, the analysis of interventions included in the SUPER database shows very little regularity in terms of what works and why. The surveyed actions are very heterogeneous in terms of goals, scales, soft or binding instruments, and in their degree of success in terms of own goals and sustainability. Moreover, what might be considered sustainable in one region may be unsustainable in another, as each region shows its own imbalance between the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainability.[13] Hence, the main message emerging from the ESPON SUPER project, and brought forward by this chapter, is the recognition that, prior to prescribing solutions, it is just as necessary to have a thorough understanding of the processes of change experienced by the different territories in Europe as well as the motivations and conditioning factors that shape everyday decision-making. Ultimately, these decisions will be the ones that, with all their achievements and shortcomings, impact and define the actual sustainability of future urbanisation patterns.

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[13] For example, a region struggling with housing affordability may need to prioritise social sustainability to achieve a better balance, whereas a heavily polluted region may need to prioritise environmental sustainability for the same reason.

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Part IV
Urban Policies for Territorial Cohesion

Chapter 7
Urban and Regional Planning for Territorial Cohesion

Barbara Demeterova

Abstract Territorial cohesion has gained significant influence in urban and regional planning at different scales. Aiming at the 'balanced' development of European regions and cities, the policy is central for the harmonisation of planning across and beyond European borders. From the Torremolinos Charter, the European Spatial Development Perspective, the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion to today's Territorial Agenda 2030, European documents gained currency and shaped the national understanding of redistribution and mutual territorial responsibilities. Through a variety of funding programmes, supporting urban, rural development as well as (cross-border) cooperation between territories, cohesion policy promotes functional approaches to integrated development and place-based approaches. However, being also addressed as a policy 'black box', unable to navigate precise planning action, it gains its strength but also shows its greatest weakness by providing a canvas for differing projections. Increased global–local competition and the policy's continuing growth-orientation furthermore raised questions about its actual contribution to local sustainability and spatial justice. Nevertheless, today European funding has become an essential source in regional development, sought-after by centres as well as peripheries. The present chapter gives an overview on territorial cohesion's origins and discusses its contribution for European territorial development and planning.

Keywords European Territorial Cohesion · Sustainable development · Spatial justice · Urban and regional planning

7.1 Introduction

With the evolution of EU Cohesion policy, the concept of cohesion was introduced as a mutual guiding term to promote and support the balanced development of European regions. Cohesion itself is a relatively broad concept, addressed by multiple disciplines without a precise definition to refer to. Discussed early in behavioural

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and social sciences, it can be understood as a basic bond in groups (Piper et al. 1983). With its codification in European documents, in particular since the adoption of the Maastricht Treaty, the EU has set its objectives towards the ‘strengthening of economic and social cohesion’ (CEC 1992). Nonetheless, the Commission of the European Communities (CEC) early studies soon acknowledged that economic and social dimensions are interlinked with a spatial component (CEC 1991, 1995). Growing interconnectivity between EU member states, the competition of the single market and the economic and monetary union, fuelled by transport, mobility growth and new communication technologies led to fundamental challenges for national spatial development and planning. As such, these challenges were no longer separable from macroregional territorial debates.

Amid growing concerns regarding regional imbalances across the member states, the aim to reduce disparities between the levels of development of various regions came into policy focus. Addressing the uneven spatial dynamics, apparent between old and new member states, the benefits of collaborating on spatial development issues across national boundaries gained recognition (Dühr et al. 2007). This further raised the awareness for regional linkages and the need for coordinated territorial action as precondition for European cohesion. The growing interest of European institutions in transnational cooperation and territorial coordination built the basis for the policy’s understanding in discussions on urban and regional development.

This book chapter deals with European territorial cohesion policy and its evolvement as tool in urban and regional planning practice. It firstly gives a general overview on the conceptual background of the policy and further points out its present implementation challenges. The empirical background builds on the authors’ research on territorial policy governance and implementation dynamics in European cross-border-cooperation programmes (Interreg) in Central Europe. Further, recent claims towards just and sustainable spatial development in the context of territorial cohesion will be discussed to point out relevant discourses shaping spatial planning policies. Finally, the conclusion summarises the central arguments and gives an outlook towards promising topics for European development and planning.

7.2 Territorial Cohesion and Spatial Planning

Discussions on the harmonisation of spatial development and planning across European territories started in the late 1980s, spurred by the growing need for mutual spatial decisions (van Gestel and Faludi 2005). Globalisation, liberalisation and locational competition increased the uneven regional impacts across the member states and led to the emergence of territorial cohesion as a European planning objective during the 1990s (Nordregio et al. 2007). Especially the Torremolinos Charter (CEC 1983) set the general objectives for European spatial planning and significantly shaped territorial cohesion’s understanding. Its objectives emphasised the balanced socio-economic development of regions, the improvement of the quality of life, the responsible management of natural resources and environmental protection, but also the rational use of land. This was based on the belief in the benefits of intensified co-operative spatial activities. Influencing European regional planning strategies, this also shaped the further discussion on European territorial cohesion. Acknowledging the spatial dimension of cohesion, alongside economic and social cohesion, the term territorial cohesion was officially referred to in the Amsterdam Treaty (CEC 1997).

In the aftermath, the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) (CEC 1999) took the first step towards turning the vague principles of the concept into a more applicable policy framework. It highlighted horizontal and vertical dimensions of cooperation at various levels and targeted a more balanced development of European territories, following a redistributive understanding. Concluding that uncoordinated development would lead towards growing territorial disparities, the ESDP identified the need to stronger protect especially structurally weaker regions but also called for a greater exchange of experience, cooperation, better monitoring and evaluation of spatial developments (CEC 1999). With overall gaps in comparative, quantifiable and geo-referenced data across European territories becoming evident in the course of the ESDP preparation, the idea of a long-term cross-national research programme on relevant spatial issues gained momentum. In 2002 this was realised through the creation of the European Spatial Planning Observation Network (ESPON) (van Gestel and Faludi 2005), that since then provides important planning relevant territorial information across the member states.

Through ESPON, understood as European grouping on territorial cooperation, also the territorial dimension in European policies, increased significantly. Nevertheless, while territorial cohesion was addressed from the second cohesion report on (CEC 2001b), it still took about ten years until it was also formally included as cohesion policy's third pillar through the Lisbon Treaty (CEC 2007b). With that, also a first action plan for European Union's Territorial Agenda (TA) was introduced (BMUB 2007), serving as framework document for a Union wide perspective for strategic spatial planning. Aiming for global competitiveness and at the same time sustainability of European regions, it envisioned territorial cohesion in particular as a permanent and cooperative process involving various actors and stakeholders. This understanding particularly reflected the successful implementation of European territorial cooperation programmes. Introduced in the early 1990s, European Interreg A, B and C (cross-border, transnational and interregional) cooperation programmes early proofed the success of co-operative spatial activities as a key instrument to tackle regional disadvantages and address shared challenges (Dühr et al. 2007). As an early community initiative Interreg aimed at the implementation of Community policies at regional levels, supporting regional development, innovation, cooperation and know-how exchange (CEC 1993).

Overall, with growing influence, territorial cohesion became increasingly understood as opposing process to regional weaknesses, counteracting existent disparities (CEC 2007a, 2017a). However, less 'fashionable' at first, through being a mostly reactive and self-centred policy, it was often considered intangible in regional practice (Nordregio et al. 2007). The policy's combination of spatial development and planning notions from two diverging planning traditions, namely the French (focussed on territorial disparities) and the German (concerned with the coordination of spatial impacts of sectoral policies), further added to the conceptual vagueness of territorial cohesion (Davoudi 2005). To clarify the conceptual understanding across the member states, the Commission released the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion, titled 'turning diversity into strength' (CEC 2008). In the aftermath, a member state-wide call for stakeholder contributions on the Green Paper intended to gain deeper insights into the national and regional understanding of territorial cohesion and its added value for regional planning. However, given the variety of responses, this approach also made the differing national and regional stakeholder perceptions of the concept evident (Abrahams 2014).

Cohesion policy in general underwent significant reforms over time and turned steadily towards aims supporting greater comparability, transparency, efficiency and result orientation, especially during the preparation for the funding period post 2013 (Barca 2009). Nonetheless, despite a number of attempts to clarify territorial cohesion for regional policies, the challenge remains to date to translate the concept into an understandable, coherent term for coordinated territorial action. Stretching across aims for good governance, networking, territorial cooperation, coordination, regional competitiveness and sustainable development (Faludi 2006, 2007; Medeiros 2016) the broad range of thematic objectives led to repeated non-academic and academic discussions on its rather confusing (Begg 2010) and black box-like (Zonneveld and Waterhout 2005) character. Therefore, some scholars pointed out the that this is leading towards an overall policy fuzziness, leaving room for multiple, hardly comparable regional interpretations (Dühr et al. 2007; Faludi 2007; Begg 2010; Abrahams 2014; Medeiros 2016; Demeterova et al. 2020b). Lacking a common understanding, it was accompanied by multiple calls for further definition and greater transparency in order to strategically assess its actual territorial impacts (van Well 2012; Medeiros 2014, 2016; Zaucha and Böhme 2019).

In general, many scholars focused their analysis on economic indicators of cohesion, due to the ease of comparison (Sala-i-Martin 1996; Niebuhr and Stiller 2003; Tvrdon 2012, Zaucha and Böhme 2019), turning to economic models like the input–output analysis (Medeiros 2016). Territorial cohesion was also addressed by using two essentialist models: the tree and the storyline model (Abrahams 2014). While the tree model tries to generate composite indicators, defining the central concept and branching out across its dimensions, the storyline model analyses essential traits common to the concept in policy documents and its wider contexts (Hajer and Wagenaar 2003; Faludi and Waterhout 2006; OECD 2008). Though these approaches appear to be dominant in the discussion on the understanding of territorial cohesion, Abrahams (2014) pointed out that conceptual definitions might be an inadequate method for understanding and assessing the concept in territorial practice. He argues, that these models are unable to explain what the concept 'does' in different territorial contexts (Abrahams 2014) and calls for more pragmatic approaches and stronger context-specific studies. Taking a different position, some empirical studies emphasized the essential, functional role played by fuzzy concepts. Arguing that, despite lacking conceptual clarity, these approaches can provide a plan and serve as a strategy to evade potential implementation barriers by functioning as a bridging concept

(Faludi 2007). Faludi (2001) identifies the advantage of ‘fuzziness’ in enabling planning concepts to become adaptable in different ways and working within existing or emerging policy frameworks. At the same time, fuzziness can also affect the comparability of supra-regional interventions and hamper planning coordination (Markusen 1999). Holding this balance between the policy’s general comparability and at the same time applicability in heterogenous regional settings remains a challenge ever since.

7.3 Cohesion, Growth and Sustainability in Planning

Through a variety of funding programmes, supporting urban (e.g. URBACT), rural development (e.g. LEADER) as well as territorial cooperation (e.g. Interreg), cohesion policy provides functional approaches to an integrated spatial development. With the increased demand for territorial coordination to tackle mutual challenges, the second territorial agenda, the TA 2020 (CEC 2011), already highlighted territorial cohesion as a common goal for a ‘harmonious and balanced’ European development. Targeting a more synchronised approach, the TA 2020 put an emphasis on the coordination of sectoral policies to optimise territorial impacts and policy coherence.

However, alongside the coordinative elements, territorial cohesion policy provides central objectives for European spatial development and planning. Considering that the EU is bound to three principles determining how and in what areas it may act, namely conferred authority, proportionality and subsidiarity, it has nevertheless only limited powers to guide the actual regional policy across the Member States (EC 2022). But, being an important investment policy, it has significantly gained relevance in regional development decisions by providing essential financial instruments for selected European investment priorities. Due to the attractiveness of the reginal funds, co-financing infrastructural and overall investment projects, this has been especially the case for economically weaker regions, partially dependent on external funding.

With growing relevance for national policies, also a focus towards economic growth and regional competitiveness consolidated alongside more sustainability-oriented development aims. By the turn of the millennium, based on the Lisbon Strategy (CEC 2001c) and the Gothenburg Strategy (CEC 2001a), ‘competitive and sustainable development’ became the two overarching development principles in European territorial policy (Nordregio et al. 2007). Aiming for “the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world” (CEC 2001c: 1) both strategies proclaimed that “economic growth, social cohesion and environmental protection must go hand in hand” (CEC 2001a: 2). Thereby, the strategies coined the understanding that growth, sustainability and socially balanced development can be achieved at the same time through appropriate policy measures and technical progress. However, the present aims for European ‘green growth’ like the European Green Deal (CEC 2019), boosting economic competitiveness while fostering sustainable development, seem to follow a rather contradictory understanding of balanced development. Some scholars pointed out that building on ‘trust’ in future technical innovations that solve negative environmental impacts while aiming for a growing, competitive economy is an approach, unlikely to lead towards just, sustainable and balanced territorial pathways (Schmid 2019; Hickel and Kallis 2020).

Nonetheless, with the Europeanisation of regional and urban policy, a shift in favour of especially urban growth and global–local competitiveness has taken place (Dühr et al. 2007; Tvrdon 2012; Rauhut and Humer 2020). European key documents on territorial cohesion, such as ESDP (CEC 1999) or the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion (CEC 2008), solidified the understanding that economic growth spreads more or less evenly across European regions and benefits them all, applying the model of polycentric development. But, as Rauhut and Humer (2020) point out, these are also trajectories in economic thought. Since agglomeration economies are increasingly cut loose locally, they largely lack the expected distributional effects to their surroundings while at the same time fuelling inter- and intra-regional imbalances (Sassen 2001; Luukkonen 2010; Tvrdon 2012; Mulíček and Malý 2019). Considering lingering regional disparities across and within European territories (CEC 2017b; Hacker 2021), it seems rather likely that spatial policies tend to overlook localised social and environmental inequities arising from global market dynamics and regional competition. As dysfunctional growth dynamics continue to selectively provide prosperity for some regions, the wellbeing of others is simultaneously put at risk. This is not only endangering the overall territorial cohesion processes but also a spatially just and sustainable development.

7.4 Regional Planning Practices—Examples from Central European Cross-Border Cooperation Programmes (Interreg)

7.4.1 Relational Added Value in Heterogenous Regional Settings

With territorial cohesion's policy implementation bound to multi-level governance and differing regional coordination systems, its implementation is shaped by structural complexity and dependence on local structures. Since scientific approaches only limitedly address context-specific aspects of territorial cohesion in planning, Demeterova et al. (2020b) studied how territorial cohesion is being understood and applied in a complex, cross-border setting. Therefore, the aim was to assess regional stakeholders' understanding of territorial cohesion and its added value for regional development. This allowed a reflection upon the respective conditions that shape the territorial configuration of the concept. The study focused on three European Interreg cross-border cooperation programmes (Interreg A) in the Austrian–Czech-Slovak–Hungarian border region in Central Europe. Choosing a multiple-case design it looked at different implementation practices (centralist vs. federal planning) and the local cohesion policy understanding in a heterogenous spatial setting. The study applied a mixed methods approach to better account for the complex regional dynamics. It traced the implementing actors' understanding and translation of territorial cohesion in the context of cross-border cooperation, combining a policy analysis with regional stakeholder interviews.

The results demonstrated that the stakeholder translation of territorial cohesion was structured along three key dimensions, namely a relational, economic, and a social dimension. These three dimensions described how territorial cohesion is understood and configured in relation to a given space, varying in different territorial contexts. Mirroring the long separation through the iron curtain within the case study region, in relational, economic, social and administrative terms, the 'added value' of territorial cohesion was strongly conceptualised along a relational dimension. This was seen as a central precondition for the further economic and social cohesion. Furthermore, the results displayed that considerable disconnects in both, the conceptual understanding of 'what territorial cohesion should do' and its implementation, seem to persist at multiple levels. While regional stakeholders overwhelmingly expressed the wish for greater conceptual clarification from the European Commission, they simultaneously benefitted from the fuzziness that allowed for a translation in accordance with their own regional needs.

However, while fuzzy conceptualisation secures territorial cohesion's broader acceptance, it also tends to increase a policy language that refers to more general regional processes. Missing responsibilities however fail to account for individual or collective action while also risking displacing the regional actors from the process (Callon 1984). With intensified pressure to justify territorial cohesion's 'added value' for territorial development, the search for comparable indicators intensified notably in the past decade. But, considering the different understandings of the concept and the often inadequate 'one size fits all' indicators for regional processes, the comparability of reported programme data was put under question. Especially in territorial contexts where relational aspects of cohesion are perceived as the greatest added value for development, the dominant quantitative indicators are unlikely to reflect the concept's 'softer' practical effects in the region. Although more bottom-up, participatory approaches gained policy attention, the concept's fuzziness was running danger to suppress agency and causality and thus hinder actual change processes. Overall, the study found that multiple cohesion policy translations have produced dynamics that create a circular process through which the fuzziness of territorial cohesion policy is reproduced. The findings demonstrated the context-dependency of territorial cohesion translations and the conceptual elasticity in the case region. With a strong relational added value for the regions, the actors' perspective hints towards multiple inter- and intrapersonal dynamics that accompany the policy implementation process, rarely reflected in present policy documents.

7.4.2 Regional Inequalities and the Right to Difference

Despite cohesion policy efforts, unequal social, economic and environmental development dynamics across Europe continue to persist. Therefore, there is the need investigate regional inequalities beyond a redistributive understanding of a balanced development. Research in the Austrian–Czech–Slovak–Hungarian border region reviled tensions between measurement-based, growth-oriented cohesion policy logics and its aims towards spatially just, sustainable transformations.

Picking up on the argument for regional ‘right to difference’ (Young, 1990), Demeterova et al. (2020a) discussed the spatial dimension of justice and the role of local capabilities (Nussbaum and Sen 1993; Dikeç 2001) for place-based development against European regional disparities. Economic data and regional documents analysed demonstrated lingering disparities between centres and peripheries as well as differences in regional development dynamics. The analysed GDP-data showed that all four analysed urban centre regions (Vienna, Prague, Bratislava and Budapest) have remained above the EU GDP-average threshold between 2006 and 2017, continuing to outpace their surrounding regions in the concentration of GDP. Showing different growth tendencies and pointing towards growing regional divergences, actual regional centre-peripheries spillovers deem questionable, rather pointing towards an economical decoupling of urban centres. Taking the three cross-border-cooperation programmes analysed (Interreg A Austria–Czech Republic, Interreg A Slovakia–Austria and Interreg A Austria–Hungary), though showing similar development needs in the border regions, different priority settings for territorial investments were chosen. With differing implementation states (in 2018) of the cooperation programmes, more underlying heterogeneous regional dynamics seem to affect the regional planning and implementation processes.

However, kept rather general, the annual implementation reports (AIR) hardly reflected on the programs’ implementation success beyond the general economic performance. Moreover, the different evaluation approaches for the programmes’ evaluation raised questions on the overall comprehensiveness and comparability of the reported data. Nonetheless, all three programmes reflected well-being, economic and environmental aspects of cohesion, comprising justice and sustainability components. Taking also into account the statements from additionally conducted stakeholder interviews in the case region, tensions between the current programme’s logics and local capabilities for development became apparent. Picking up Nussbaum’s (2013) critique on macroeconomic synthetic indicators to depict developmental progress, the study found that the current representation of development ‘success’ more likely allows the maintenance of the regional status quo rather than serving actual transition processes.

Considering the empirical findings, the study also observed a strong resource distribution-oriented logic in European policy implementation, rather than an orientation towards capabilities. Also showing that regional diversity is likely to reproduce uneven territorial impacts under present policy logics, it illustrated the context and scale dependency of the cohesion measures in the analysed regions. Therefore, the study questioned the effectiveness of uniform planning interventions for sustainable development. With present development measures not being able to mitigate the continuance of existing spatial inequalities across the regions, the analysed data indicated that using growth-driven approaches for spatial development only limitedly capture all dimensions of territorial cohesion at the regional scale. More likely, the regional dynamics show a catch-up-driven struggle for locational competition. Therefore, calling for the 'right to not catch up' as a thought experiment that interlinks spatial justice and territorial sustainability, the study joined long-running critiques on territorial cohesion's implementation and measurement, with increasing dissatisfaction with business-as-usual models. The spatial justice approach shows potential to better reflect horizontal aspects, like access to and provision of resources, as well as vertical aspects of justice, like participation, self-determination and power relations, by focussing on regional capabilities. Supporting the right to difference, a spatial justice perspective could therefore also account for non-linear regional transition processes that allow for a post-growth paradigm. The study thus pointed out the need for a general reframing and rescaling of what is considered a successful development for more balanced and sustainable spatial processes across European regions.

7.5 Learning Goals and Place-Based Approaches for Just- and Sustainable Development

Considering the introduced implementation in central European border regions, it becomes apparent that territorial development is strongly bound to actor centred processes and explicit local development dynamics. Thereby, cohesion policy implementation is on the one hand structured along relational components. On the other hand, as regional diversity is posing a thread and at the same time is bearing potentials for spatial development, it too plays a central role for future just and sustainable territorial approaches.

Building on the observations made in the studies on central European cross-border-cooperation and territorial development, a reorientation on what is being considered successful development seems like an option worthwhile considering. Given the tendency of European cohesion policy to choose the same growth-oriented answers to regional needs, despite the continuance of regional disparities, Demeterova (2022, in press) asked for more general, underlying discourses in European territorial polices that in turn shape local development strategies. The study therefore investigated past and present cohesion and environmental policy goal settings effecting actual European spatial planning. Joining Pike's et al. (2007) critique on too generalist regional policy frameworks, risking to reduce social, environmental and territorial challenges for easy to address, measurable and solely technical questions, it analysed present development discourses in the context of territorial cohesion, justice and sustainability. With regards to resilient development and planning responses from an actor's perspective, it discussed interdisciplinary approaches for relational planning (Kurath et al. 2018), learning (Dweck 1986, 1999) and social action (Argyris 1993). Using a qualitative content analysis (Silverman 2006) the study focussed on selected European cohesion policy regulations and framework documents for sustainable territorial development and action (Common Provisions Regulations for Cohesion Policy, European Territorial Agendas and the Environmental Action Programmes). To assess the framing process over time, the study investigated the central documents for the past 2014–2020 and present 2021–2027 cohesion policy funding period. Furthermore, using the framing analysis approach as a conceptual and analytic tool (Shmueli 2008), five central framing categories were selected (understanding, goalsetting, problematisation, solution/action and the characterisation of progress) to assess the framing of present approaches towards sustainable development and justice in European territorial planning policies.

Overall, the documents, appeared to frame sustainable and just development either as a resource management, a coordinative task or as a process of taking informed actions. This understanding then guided their further focus setting on the chosen five framing categories. The results indicated that the first frame, the understanding of sustainable development, was strongly structured along categories such as distributive balance, spatial justice or systemic transition. When it comes to the framing of goalsetting and prioritisation, the focus was laid towards growth and competitiveness, territorial integration or coherence and synergies. Though addressing multiple fields for action, the general problematisation was mostly framed through the lenses of territorial disparities, insufficient cooperation and coordination, or as a deficient knowledge and inaction. Taking the framing of mobilisation and solution approaches, the rhetoric was mainly structured along the need for financial management, ensuring synergies and multi-level-governance as well as the need for stronger knowledge and capacity building. Finally, the characterisation of progress appeared to be framed along territorial performance, the territorial impacts, well-being and ownership-centred approaches to development. While over time, the documents remained to keep a growth and performance orientation, the new funding period documents stronger reflected reginal diversity, place sensitivity and justice components in spatial processes.

Also, in contrast to the Cohesion Policy Provisions and the Territorial Agendas, the European Environmental Action Programmes showed that a strong sustainable transition orientation comes along with knowledge and capacity building and more systemic approaches to development. With regional policy approaches the tendency to focus on growth, through so-called ‘performance’ goals, lingering disparities point towards ‘helpless’ rather than ‘resilient’ regional responses (Dweck 1999; Grant and Dweck 2003). Thereby, considered through the lens of organisational psychology, given the importance of relational components of policy implementation, the regions could become ‘stuck’, not being able to adapt to novel challenges and explore their full capabilities. Taking up this perspective, the study proposed a stronger emphasis on ‘learning goals’ in European cohesion policy instead as a promising alterative towards sustainable transitions. This focus allows for stronger acknowledgement of regional learning, actor-centred processes, relational aspects of planning and at the same time leave enough space for capabilities’ oriented local development strategies. Not tied to regional competitiveness limitations, adopting also open-ended goal settings in planning policies could foster transition processes that allow for more locally sensitive responses to present development challenges. Without mostly pre-set quantifiable outcomes, the stronger orientation towards qualitative 'learning goals' could open new perspectives on complex regional process and collective action-oriented approaches in European territorial development and planning.

7.6 Conclusion

The present book chapter focussed on aspects that influence urban and regional planning in the context of European territorial cohesion policy. Addressing its growing influence in European spatial planning, it pointed towards the policy's struggle between keeping a general comparability and at the same time remain applicable in heterogenous regional settings. Referring to its focus on increased cooperative activities to tackle mutual regional challenges, it also highlighted the policy's significance for regional investments and growing relevance for national policies. These developments steadily led to a policy focus in favour of economic growth and regional competitiveness, alongside sustainability-oriented aims. Especially the Lisbon Strategy (CEC 2001c) and the Gothenburg Strategy (CEC 2001a) coined these two overarching development and planning principles. They aligned European spatial strategies towards growth and competition oriented and at the same time sustainable development principles. However, though 'green growth' concepts had a significant influence on European policies, such as the European Green Deal (CEC 2019), they are also a contradiction in terms. Considering the negative environmental impacts arising from a strong economy together with the tendency of spatial policies to overlook localised social and environmental inequities, dysfunctional growth dynamics are likely to consolidate. Providing selectively prosperity for some regions, mostly the centre-regions, the well-being of others is put at risk. Given the regional dynamics in the analysed Austrian–Czech–Slovakian–Hungarian border lands in Central Europe, the chapter points towards the need for reframing and rescaling of what is considered a successful development in the context of territorial cohesion policy. Furthermore, it called for the 'right to not catch up' as a thought experiment that could change the perspective on economically weaker regions, in order to allow for more spatially just and sustainable territorial dynamics.

Discussing long-running critiques on territorial cohesion's implementation and measurement, with increasing dissatisfaction with business-as-usual models, a stronger spatial justice-oriented approach in planning could better reflect horizontal aspects in regional development. Thereby, alongside economic indicators, a greater focus on access to and provision of resources, as well as vertical aspects of justice, like participation, self-determination and power relations should be laid. Concluding that European cohesion policy is in need to move away from redistributive or compensatory logics towards more justice and capabilities-oriented, relational approaches to territorial development and planning, also the idea of using stronger 'learning goals'-oriented strategies has been introduced. Moving away from the dominant 'performance goals' focus in regional development would better reflect relational aspects of planning, learning processes and actor-centred dynamics. At the same time, it would leave enough space for capabilities-oriented, local development strategies towards sustainable regional transitions.

A positive step towards a more place-sensible, sustainable and just understanding of territorial processes can be considered the new TA 2030 (CEC 2020) together with the cohesion policy framework for the 2021–2027 (CEC 2021) planning period. Both started to strongly acknowledge the importance of the local dimension as decisive factor for a spatially just and balanced territorial development. With a stronger focus on place-based approaches (e.g. through community-led local development), also an emphasis on learning, sharing best practices and joint working groups was laid to support territorial policy implementation. By establishing the Just Transition Fund, also a new perspective towards justice in territorial processes was introduced, in line with territorial cohesion and place-based approaches. This serves the better acknowledgement regional diversity, taking a potential oriented perspective on diverse territorial settings (CEC 2020). Thereby, also territorial and local development strategies are likely to gain in significance, helping to create more diversified approaches towards just and sustainable regional transitions. Whatever will be the case, further academic work on urban and regional planning practices for territorial cohesion will have to prove.

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Chapter 8
Spatial Planning for Territorial Cohesion

Joaquín Farinós-Dasí

Abstract This chapter analyses the role and importance of Spatial Planning to effectively implement Territorial Cohesion as principle, objective and policy. It is argued that the relations between the two occur in a double sense. On the one hand, Spatial Planning facilitates a balanced territorial development (spatial justice); both in its function of establishing order and coherence in space (correcting regional imbalances based on an adequate distribution of services and facilities of general interest; that is, the territorialisation of economic and social cohesion) and in its function of promoting sustainable spatial development by taking advantage of the potential and the own character of each territory, favouring territorial cooperation processes at different levels. On the other hand, Territorial Cohesion emerged at European level as an essential element of the European Union project (with difficulties in becoming a First-Pillar Policy on which to apply the Community Method) but with unavoidable multilevel nature (beyond the Intergovernmental Method), boosting and facilitating an interpretation of Spatial Planning as Strategic, Comprehensive and Smart, and promoting innovations in this regard (style, instruments and procedures) in all Member States. This stimulates progress in the appropriate combination between Regional Economic Development Planning and Land Use Planning, towards a new Integrated Planning style assembling Spatial/Regional Planning in a territorial sense (which is especially relevant for cohesion countries); now with in a green and health perspective (according with New Green Deal, Next Generation EU Program and Multiannual Financial Framework 2021–2027).

Keywords European Union project · Territorial cohesion · European spatial planning · Territorial agenda · Spatial planning systems · NextGenerationEU Recovery Plan for Europe

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8.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the role and importance of Spatial Planning to effectively implement Territorial Cohesion processes. But, what is cohesion if not territorial cohesion? The current Treaty of the European Union refers in its article 3.3 to the promotion of "economic, social and territorial cohesion, and solidarity among Member States". Pursuant to this commitment, the economic and social cohesion policy became a first-pillar policy since Maastricht Treaty (European Union 1992) with which to reduce the differences between the levels of development of the regions, as a framework of solidarity at European level for a balanced and sustainable territorial development. With this recognition, the European Regional Policy (today Cohesion Policy) would be developed, counting for this with the financing of the Structural Funds (today Cohesion Funds).

Like any policy, but even more so in its case, cohesion has a territorial nature and effects, as long as it is applied to a specific space. The territorial dimension was already present since the reform of the Structural Funds of 1988, as a criterion to determine the distribution and location of said Funds in accordance with the different objectives of the European Regional Policy of that time (the regionalized objectives 1, 2, 5b of then, and objective 6 arose on the occasion of the enlargement to 15 Member States with the incorporation of Austria, Sweden and Finland). However, the territorial dimension was limited to this. There are two possible upward interpretations of economic and social cohesion that would lead to territorial cohesion:

(a) As a territorialisation of social cohesion, transferring it from individuals to territories ('economic cohesion' and 'social and territorial cohesion') in order to reduce inequalities and enable the same starting possibilities for any European citizen, regardless of where they inhabit. From this point of view, the principle of spatial justice or territorial equity is insisted on, conceived as equal opportunities to achieve the development of the person in all parts of a territory. For this, equal access to the goods, services, equipment and infrastructures necessary to be able to develop an initiative or life project in any place must be ensured. The accessibility to services such as medical assistance, education and sustainable energy, broadband internet access, efficient connections to energy networks, other companies and research centres, becomes one of the key elements for cohesion. Territorial equity, or spatial justice, as element that should guide public actions makes sense to the extent that, in practice, there are significant imbalances and differences in quality of life depending on location, especially between rural and urban areas, between peripheral and central spaces. One of the main functions of Spatial Planning is just the reduction of territorial imbalances, as CEMAT *Torremolinos Charter* recognized in 1983.[1]

(b) If the interpretation of Territorial Cohesion is accepted (as it has been the trend) not only as a corrector but also as an enhancer of opportunities defined

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[1] https://rm.coe.int/6th-european-conference-of-ministers-responsible-for-regional-planning/168076dd93 (accessed 02.12.22).

> from and by the territories themselves (taking advantage of their own potential and supporting those with fewer possibilities, encouraging the territorial cooperation), then the question will be different.

From positive discrimination it would go to a regional classification by types of territories within which there may be a mixture of more and less dynamic spaces. They must establish cooperation strategies between them for the objective of sustainable spatial development (as described in the first guiding principle of the document of the European Spatial Development Perspective-ESDP-of May 1999). The question of inter-municipal cooperation is related both to territorial articulation and territorial cohesion (Farinós 2013), as well as to the classic debate on the optimal scale for the provision of services (concentration or decentralization—'*Public Choice*') and territorial scope of government action.

Then, 'territorial' appears as the third dimension of cohesion, with its own and individualized identity: 'economic cohesion', 'social cohesion' and 'territorial cohesion'. Territorial Cohesion not only seeks a more balanced development but also the improvement of the productivity of activities in territories in a way that allows them to be more competitive, also adding elements of self-organization, endogenous development, sustainability and governance.

Thus, territorial development and cohesion are related both to the general interest (through-economic-services of general interest) and to the use of endogenous resources and the formulation of territorial cooperation strategies. Taking advantage of territorial assets to achieve a greater economic efficiency and better social cohesion, and taking into account the ecological balance in development planning. In this sense, Territorial Cohesion is linked to the objectives of sustainability and improvement of well-being and quality of life.[2]

The idea of active territories, as well as that of local employment sources from the *White Paper on growth, competitiveness, employment: The challenges and ways forward into the 21st Century* (EC 1994) bring us closer to a new 'communicative rationality' (Habermas 1984), to collaborative planning (Healey 2005) as well as to an interpretation of Territorial Cohesion not only as a corrector but as an enhancer of opportunities defined from and by the territories themselves, which learn to cooperate.

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[2] While economic intelligence identifies ethics exclusively from the legal point of view, territorial intelligence represents respect for the principles on which sustainable development is based, taking into account transparency for adequate participation of all the actors present in a territory (Farinós 2017).

It is more feasible to achieve sustainable, fair, dignified and cohesive territorial development on a local scale, where the actors are in direct contact with their territory and it is easier to know their needs in order to act. For this reason, the first requirement for territorial intelligence is to promote the dissemination of information in an open and transparent manner in an adequate communication environment: institutional (government intelligence-Farinós 2020a) and socio-territorial (culture territorial—Farinós et al. 2017). This territorial intelligence is supported by an adequate level of maturity of the political system and the availability of sufficient information and indicators with which to be able to recognize existing territorial dynamics and assess the impact of policies on them.

From this point of view, Territorial Cohesion implies greater participation in the formulation and application of policies, for example, based on strategic territorial planning, in its three functions: 'aménager'/harmonize (put in order for coherence) the full space to be planned; promote development based on the character and resources of the territory (Smart Specialization Strategies); coordinate the different policies and levels through new forms of territorial governance that make them coherent.

The way in which each territorial scale is coordinated is very important, within the same level and between the said level and the others in order to try to achieve an adequate coherence of the actions. Climate Change, for example, is a global issue; but decisions about its effects and corrective, preventive or palliative actions must be taken at the local level, even though there are commitments and ratifications of principles accepted at the macro level. The growing trend towards multilevel government, and its disconnected ('confederalizing') compartmentalization, means that actions on the territory are very fragmented. This multi-scalarity is a key issue for the future, since ultimately it would make it possible to agree on territorial cohesion strategies at different coordinated levels.

8.2 Towards a Shared Understanding of Territorial Cohesion

Concepts such as Polycentrism and Territorial Cohesion have been formulated and introduced from the European Union. These are generally accepted concepts in a generous way, although they are somewhat 'fuzzy' regarding their meaning and the way in which they are reflected, planned and evaluated in a comparable way, since they must be adapted to specific contexts to generate a consensus (Elissalde and Santamaría 2018). It is precisely to be able to advance in this work that the Commission and some of the Member States committed to the European Territorial Agenda (TA), approved in 2007, and its action plan, encouraged the debate on the *Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion*.[3]

In an attempt to define Territorial Cohesion, it can be interpreted as a principle, an objective and a policy at the same time:

(a) As a principle, cohesion is based on the classic and redistributive European Regional Policy, but it goes further and adds to it certain elements of self-organization, endogenous development, good governance and productivity improvement, combining solidarity, justice and territorial competitiveness.

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[3] *Green Paper on territorial cohesion and debate on the future reform of the cohesion policy*. P6_TA(2009)0163. European Parliament resolution of 24 March 2009 on the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion and the state of the debate on the future reform of cohesion policy (2008/2174(INI)) (2010/C 117 E/11). https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2010:117E:0065:0072:En:PDF < accessed 02.12.22>.

> For this, it requires the implementation of new forms of territorial governance (ESPON Project 2.3.2 2007): horizontal (coordination/coherence of sectoral policies with territorial impact), vertical-multilevel (among the different competent administrations), the development of partnerships (between territories-territorial cooperation—and between the local, regional and national stakeholders involved), and citizen participation for the preparation of sustainable territorial development strategies.

In this sense, Territorial Cohesion could be defined as a principle for any of the public actions aimed at achieving objectives such as: binding ties between members of a territorial community (social cohesion) and promoting their equitable access to services and equipment (equity/spatial justice); configure a common territorial project based on respect for diversity and particularities; articulate and communicate the different parts of the territory, combating the current trends towards polarization and inequality between territories, taking advantage of the strengths and inherent features of each of them. The objective of cohesion arises at two levels: internal, pursuing the internal coherence of the territory, and external, improving the connectivity of each territory with neighbouring territories. A principle, therefore, that includes three elements: the physical articulation between the parts of the territory, territorial equity and the identification of the community with a common project (ODTA 2009).

Even though "Territorial cohesion" is a "Treaty objective", its "conformance" in Cohesion Policy regulations has been weak (Purushottam 2015). For example, in the case of the Europe 2020 Agenda, the predominant focus was economic growth. An attempt was made to compensate for this through a parallel document such as the *'Territorial Agenda 2020'*—TA 2020-(Böhme et al. 2011), and also with some limited progresses to develop "integrated approach for territorial development" by adopting provisions such as CLLD's (Community Led Local Development initiatives, arts. 32 & ff. of Regulation (EU) 1303/2013) and ITI's (Integrated Territorial Investments, art. 36). In this way Territorial Cohesion potentially offers a unifying normative direction for the diversity of European planning styles and systems in the same way that the spatial approach was applied to the ESDP (Adams et al. 2011, cited in Farinós 2020b).

(b) As an objective, it seeks a balanced and competitive development of the EU territory through the use of the endogenous territorial potential (in its diversity).[4] The set of European policies with territorial impact must aim at this objective;

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[4] The apparent contradiction between competitiveness and balance objectives is intended to be overcome through the instrumentation/implementation of Territorial Cohesion through polycentric development. Polycentrism is considered both the manifestation and the instrument of Territorial Cohesion, which is intended to be achieved through the configuration of networks of territories (including urban/rural partnerships, city networks, neighbourhood strategies, etc.) who cooperate together in order to live and compete better. The coexistence of intermediate cities that play the role of urban poles of a certain entity, but also of small municipalities with little population and provision of services, is the main element that, from the point of view of integrated polycentric and urban–rural development, it is especially relevant.

mainly the European Regional Policy, but also others such as Common Agricultural Policy, Trans-European Transport Networks, R&D, Energy, etc. All policies have a territorial impact; from demographic and immigration evolution to Regional Policy (with its investments, incentives and state aid) and to Rural, Infrastructure, Environmental, Urban, Industrial, Tourism, R&D… ones. However, a gradation can be established between one and the other based on their importance at each scale (due to the distribution of competencies or the impacts suffered or expected at each level). Their combination is particular in each case, depending on each territory. The challenge is to convert this regional economic approach (growth) not only into a new economic geography (balance and sustainability) but also into a new territorial geography (territorial government as a complex system) for the establishment of appropriate Spatial Visions.

(c) As a policy, it can be considered as a transversal policy. Territorial Cohesion reinforces, but goes beyond, the notion of economic and social cohesion, and would integrate physical, economic and sectoral planning. A melting pot policy for the rest of the policies with territorial impact, a territorial policy at European scale aimed at: achieving harmonious (between territories) and comprehensive (economically competitive, socially fair and environmentally sustainable) development, through the use of the own territorial capital (diverse) of each space; coordinating the efforts of administrations, actors and citizens to define pertinent spatial visions, through cooperation between territories that associate to be able to compete more efficiently. With regard to the coordination instruments to give coherence to the policies, the focus should be placed more on the processes (routines and forms of governance) than on the structures and instruments, which vary depending on each State tradition/style.

8.3 Important: Territorial Cohesion as First Pillar Policy for the of EU Project

Does and should the EU have a role in promoting Territorial Cohesion? Not only has it but it is also essential as a way of continuing to ensure the viability of the European project (solidarity as the Union's mortar); but also, in a less important and more pragmatic way, for the greater efficiency of policies (avoiding the costs and diseconomies of non-coordination). Hence the need to integrate territorial policy concerns into sectoral policies.[5]

As we pointed out in Farinós (2020b: 7): "*According to the Global Future Survey* (Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2017), *Europe is one of those who least believe in the*

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[5] As a key policy priority, 'Territorial Policy Integration' was defined as the attempt "… To integrate the territorial dimension into EU policies with the aim of achieving a coherent approach to the development of the EU territory, on the basis of the concept of territorial cohesion" (Luxembourg Presidency. 2005. Presidency Conclusions, Informal Ministerial Meeting on Regional Policy and Territorial Cohesion. Brussels, 20–21 May, p. 1).

intervention of the State in the Economy. However, it is appropriate to raise the focus from national to supranational (European) to regulate financial markets, find continental solutions and try to preserve the—EU-*welfare model. The framework is no longer national, but supranational… with a new revised regionalism* (Farinós 2014)". Economic competitiveness is not yet only a national issue but becomes a matter of European importance. Not only to maintain positions at global level but also to develop new kind of advantages based on the new green and blue economy, cultural industry, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and fourth industrial revolution (Fondation Robert Schuman 2019; PWC 2018; EC 2019); as well as, and mainly, in order to facilitate a more balanced development among territories (Territorial Cohesion goal) no person and no place left behind (Just Transition Mechanism).[6]

Despite the intense debates and the effort that was made to make Territorial Cohesion a First-Pillar Policy (as a matter with competence of the EU recognized in the Treaties), the most that was reached in the New Constitutive Treaty of the Lisbon EU in 2007, finally ratified by all the Member States in November 2009, went to the incorporation of the third adjective 'territorial' to the pre-existing Economic and Social Cohesion Policy.

Article 3 of the Lisbon New Treaty of the Union (European Union 2007) establishes as fundamental objective, among others as internal market, to promote a balanced growth of the EU, creating employment opportunities and social progress (art. 174), combating exclusion and discrimination, promoting justice and social protection. However, in the current crisis situation European citizens both perceive more clearly the breach of these objectives and question the EU project (discontent movements—see Dijkstra et al. 2020); just when this EU project should be more based on cooperation and solidarity and a shared European intelligence. Social inequalities and the impoverishment of the middle classes in developed societies are a serious socio-political risk, as well as signifying a loss of well-being for a significant part of the population that can encourage both extremism and the irrational and ineffective exploitation of the resources of the Planet, as a manifestation of discontent and hopelessness.

Decisions on territorial matters have always worked outside the traditional Community Method reserved for first pillar policies. Although the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) was innovatively targeted with the configuration of the Spatial Development Committee throughout the process of preparing the ESDP document (Faludi 2007), the preferred option since 2004, with the start of the process of the first European Territorial Agenda (TA) at the Rotterdam meeting, will be the Intergovernmental Method. This happened after the enlargement of the EU to 25 Member States (in 2004), then to 27 (in 2007), and the certainty that the complex process of drawing up the ESDP of the 15 would not be repeated. As a result, the territorial question is taken into account in community investments, but usually far from an integrated approach, embodied through sectoral instruments.

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[6] https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal/finance-and-green-deal/just-transition-mechanism_en (accessed 02.12.22).

Consequently, as the then Regional Policy Commissioner herself recognized, the progress in incorporating the territorial dimension in documents such as the mid-term review of the Lisbon Agenda (in 2005), the Gothenburg Agenda (in 2006) and the Strategic Guidelines for the European Regional Policy for the period 2007–13 (of 2005), had been far from satisfactory. And all this despite the fact that the main challenge of the said Territorial Agenda was to integrate the territorial dimension into European policies with the aim of improving coherence in the territorial development of the EU, based on the concept of Territorial Cohesion. Thus, at the next meeting in Luxembourg (held on 20–21.05.2005), the Presidency's conclusions document[7] recognized that the incorporation of the territorial dimension and the concept of Territorial Cohesion could add greater value to the implementation of the Lisbon and Gothenburg Strategy, by promoting structured and sustainable economic growth (Farinós 2021).

This recognition culminated in 2008 with the publication of the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion '*Turning territorial diversity into strength*' (SEC(2008) 2550).[8] It warns of the risks that the trend towards concentration of economic activity may imply, and highlights the possibilities offered by the European urban network, focusing on the objective of sustainable development for better use of territorial assets. In this way, it is proposed to compensate the differences in population density between territories (by promoting the coordinated development of cities in mixed and rural areas), connecting territories seeking access to the main services, and promoting cooperation at different levels. In this way, territorial cooperation was consolidated as one of the favourite formulas, if not the most, for the objective of Territorial Cohesion, and to achieve greater territorial integration of both the European space and project (Farinós 2009, 2013).

8.3.1 Bridges Between the Cohesion Policy (Community) and Spatial Development (Intergovernmental)

If the process of ESDP elaboration and approval it turned out to be a first trial outside the traditional Community Method and the '*Comitology*' committees, an OMC '*avant la lettre*' before the Lisbon Summit of 2000 (Faludi 2007), since the approval of the European Territorial Agenda in 2007 will begin to develop new forms of relationship between Member States and the European Commission. Such as the TCUM (Sub-Committee on Territorial Cohesion and Urban Matters), a forum dependent on the former COCOF (Committee of the Coordination of Funds, created in 2007 on the basis of the Council Regulation establishing general provisions on

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[7] EU Informal Ministerial Meeting on Territorial Cohesion 20/21.05.2007 in Luxembourg. *Presidency Conclusions*. http://www.eu2005.lu/en/actualites/documents_travail/2005/05/20regio/Min_DOC_2_MinConcl_fin.pdf (accessed 02.12.2022).

[8] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2008:0616:FIN:EN:PDF (accessed 02.12.2022).

Structural Funds), afterwards replaced by the COESIF (Coordination Committee for European Structural and Investment Funds) and the EGESIF (Group of experts in Structural and Investment Funds). It helps for the exchange of information on territorial and urban issues between the European Commission (DG REGIO) and the Member States, including the monitoring of the Territorial and Urban Agendas, on whose status the rotating Presidencies of the Union report.

The TCUM belongs to the comitology of the European Commission. It was composed of one or two delegates (depending on the institutional arrangements of the Member States) representing Territorial Cohesion and Urban Affairs. If previously separate meetings were held for territorial and urban development, these subgroups merged with the birth of TCUM, becoming the forum for technical discussion on territorial cohesion and urban affairs (Salez 2011). This was an attempt to advance in a more comprehensive vision between city and territory, as already recognized at the Athens Charter of 1931.

During the Portuguese presidency of the EU in 2007, the Network of Territorial Cohesion Contact Points (NTCCP) was created. Through it, communication would take place between all those directly affected by the Territorial Agenda and its First Action Program. The NTCCP is made up of representatives of the Member States, the candidate countries and the invited countries (Iceland, Norway and Switzerland), the institutions of the European Union and the relevant territorial stakeholders. The distinction between the Leipzig Charter and the Territorial Agenda led to a separation between the UDG (Urban Development Group), which had been working on sustainable urban development (Leipzig Charter of 2007), and the NTCCP.

The revision of the TA 2007 took place in 2010, giving way in 2011 to the TA 2020, approved at the informal meeting of Ministers held on 05/19/2011 in Gödöllő under the Hungarian Presidency. With it, it was also intended to cover the gap on territorial issues left by the Europe 2020 Strategy of the moment (EU2020), focused primarily on economic growth and the fight against Climate Change.[9] It was the forced reaction to try to maintain the territory, through the idea of Territorial Cohesion, on the European political agenda, given the predominant focus on economic growth and employment in the EU 2020 (Farinós 2021).

The implementation of the roadmap of the subsequent TA 2020 was to be monitored by both the NTCCP and UDG networks.[10] Following the meetings of the

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[9] This, in turn, replaced the unsuccessful Lisbon Strategy of 2000 (also known as the Lisbon Process, approved at the European Council meeting in March of that year) and the European Union Strategy for environmental sustainable development of 2001 (known as the Gothenburg Strategy).

[10] The UDG was the first group to be formed a few months after the approval of the ESDP; specifically, at the Tampere meeting, in October 1999, in which the Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning, Urban Affairs and Regional Policy decided to "*initiate a process of operational cooperation*" in the field of urban development, considering the implementation of the point 2.1.6 of its action programme. To this end, a mandate was made to the Space Development Committee (responsible for the entire process of elaboration of the ESDP) to establish an informal Working Group. This Intergovernmental group, called UDG, drew up a proposal for a multiannual program of cooperation in urban policy within the EU, which would be supported when Urban Agenda would be launched (at the informal meeting of Ministers responsible for urban affairs held in Lille in November 2000) (Salez 2011: 4). For the NTCCP one will have to wait until November 2007.

UDG and NTCCP held in the successive rotating presidencies of the EU (Nicosia in September 2012, Dublin in April 2013, Vilnius in November 2013, Milan in September 2014, Luxembourg in October 2015), the meeting in Malta was reached in March 2017. At this meeting, the impact that the TA 2020 was assessed as limited, which is why it was considered necessary to include the territorial dimension, with a more comprehensive vision, in the long-term strategy for Europe 2050. To this end, the discussions in the NTCCP would be intensified, with the active participation of interested parties. Already under the Croatian Presidency, informal meetings of the NTCCP and the UDG were held in Zagreb in February and April 2020, with public employees and General Directors responsible of Territorial Cohesion and Urban Affairs. Regarding Territorial Cohesion, it was intended to deepen the debate and adopt preliminary conclusions related to the revision procedure of the Territorial Agenda 2020. Regarding urban policies, the implementation of the Urban Agenda was debated and supported, and the steps to follow after its revision were discussed. In total, more than 50 representatives participated to prepare the next meeting of General Directors responsible for Territorial Cohesion to be held on 20th October 2020 as a conclusive part of the review process of the Territorial Agenda.

On its part, the UDG prepared the meeting of General Directors on Urban Development and the Leipzig Informal Meeting of Ministers responsible for Urban Development on 30th November 2020. The priorities in this case were to update the Leipzig Charter as a strategic framework for development integrated urban development for the common good, and continue to develop the implementation document of the Urban Agenda for the EU.

On 1st December 2020, at the informal ministerial meeting in Leipzig, the Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning and/or Territorial Cohesion adopted the *Territorial Agenda 2030: A sustainable future for all places and people in Europe* (TA 2030), to face the great current challenges, such as Climate Change, sustainable development, the growing social and territorial imbalances and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on local and regional development. For this, TA 2020 underlines the importance of Strategic Spatial Planning and calls for strengthening the territorial dimension of sectoral policies at all levels of governance. This must be based on two main principles: (i) a common understanding that development needs and impacts of future developments may be different in each of the European territories, and (ii) cooperation and coordination between territories, levels of government, political sectors and social groups, to be able to address complex problems based on an adequate use of the diverse potential available in each case.

On July 12th, 2011, the joint meeting of the NTCCP and the UDG was held in Warsaw, under the Polish Presidency of the EU. Some representatives of national Ministries questioned the combination of groups that elaborate territorial and urban development policies. To this end, an expert report would be prepared on the future situation of both groups (Salez 2011). Years later, the Bucharest Declaration, adopted by the Ministers responsible for Urban Affairs on 14th June 2019, recognized the need to develop a functional relationship between the future Leipzig Charter, the EU Urban Agenda and the subsequent Territorial Agenda after 2020; which was an acknowledgment of the excessive dispersion in this matter. The initiative did not prosper.

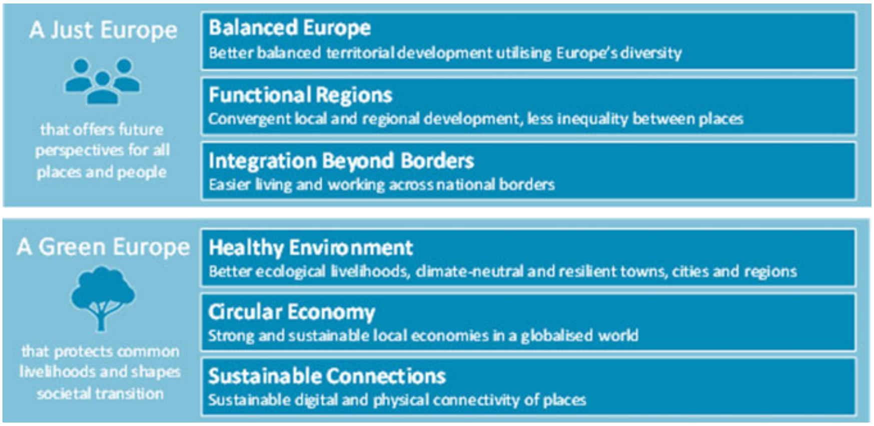
A Just Europe
that offers future perspectives for all places and people
Balanced Europe
Better balanced territorial development utilising Europe's diversity
Functional Regions
Convergent local and regional development, less inequality between places
Integration Beyond Borders
Easier living and working across national borders
A Green Europe
that protects common livelihoods and shapes societal transition
Healthy Environment
Better ecological livelihoods, climate-neutral and resilient towns, cities and regions
Circular Economy
Strong and sustainable local economies in a globalised world
Sustainable Connections
Sustainable digital and physical connectivity of places

Fig. 8.1 Territorial priorities for Europe. *Source* https://territorialagenda.eu/aim.html

To this end, it defines two general objectives, a fair Europe and a green Europe, articulated around six priorities (three and three) for the development of the European territory as a whole and in each of its territories (see Fig. 8.1). The first one is oriented, in line with the traditional cohesion policy, to: reduce the imbalances between people and territories, improving the quality of life, making services of general interest more accessible; fight against demographic and social imbalances, encouraging digitalization and the fourth industrial revolution based on ITCs; and promote employment and economic development, improving the articulation and interdependence between places, guaranteeing their own character and recognition within a progressive process of European integration. The second is intended to respond to the growing pressure on sustainable development and Climate Change, fighting against the loss of biodiversity and the increasing land consumption; seek to improve the quality of air, soil and water in order to have safer, more affordable and sustainable energy, based on circular value chains and adequate conservation of Nature, landscape and cultural heritage.

8.4 Parallelisms and Proximities Between Territorial Cohesion and Spatial Planning: More at States Level than of the European Union

Spatial Planning is not a shared competence at the European level, despite several discussions about its convenience. Spatial Planning faces the challenge of demonstrating its relevance. Based on evidence, but also on values oriented towards general interest defence, or seeking the best possible combination and balance between the various ‘general interests’ existing at the European level. Spatial Planning, this time most clearly related to new / renewed development models (Green and Blue) and new territorial governance routines (in Post-modern States), represents an alternative way to a smarter, healthy, just and cohesive development and territorial and social cohesion.

First cited in the '*Second progress report on economic and social cohesion*' (2001), Territorial Cohesion seemed destined to become the element that would make it possible to develop Spatial Planning at European scale. On his part, the '*Third progress report on cohesion—towards a new partnership for growth, jobs and cohesion*' (2004) intended to provide guidance on the conceptual lack of definition of Territorial Cohesion and on its distinction with respect to social and economic cohesion:

> The concept of territorial cohesion extends beyond the notion of economic and social cohesion by both adding to this and reinforcing it. In policy terms, the objective is to help achieve a more balanced development by reducing existing disparities, preventing territorial imbalances and by making both sectoral policies which have a spatial impact and regional policy more coherent. The concern is also to improve territorial integration and encourage cooperation between regions (EC 2004: 2).[11]

Therefore, it would integrate physical and economic planning, and also the objectives of competitiveness, balance and sustainability, and would be related to territorial governance. Territorial Cohesion should be considered as a transversal policy, as a melting pot of policies with territorial impact aimed at: (a) achieving harmonious (between territories) and comprehensive (economically competitive, socially fair and environmentally sustainable) development; (b) through the use of the diverse own territorial capital/resources of each space, coordinating the efforts of administrations, stakeholders and citizens to define pertinent strategies for territorial development; (c) through cooperation between territories that associate to be able to compete better (polycentrism as a manifestation and instrument of Territorial Cohesion, for the configuration of networks of territories -including urban/rural partnerships-, networks of cities and neighbourhood strategies).

This means jointly considering the three mentioned objectives of Spatial Planning: 'aménagement' and "harmony" to seek coherence (Santamaria 2022) (corrective and balanced), development (taking advantage of competitive potential, supporting strategies of territorial development of any area) and coordination (through new forms of governance).

In the current context of recovery and ecological transition, we are facing new problems and territorial challenges that lead us to a new understanding of Spatial Planning that moves more towards its functions of development, coordination (governance) and prevention or correction of impacts; thanks to a more harmonious territorial development, taking advantage of the characteristics of each territory, focusing on functional regions and territorial integration beyond borders. In this current scenario, it is intended to achieve some progress:

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[11] Available in https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/ES/ALL/?uri=celex:52004DC0107 (accessed 05.02.23).

- Complement the objective of 'aménagement' (of activities, population, infrastructures and activities) with the increase in productivity that improves territorial competitiveness in the style of initiatives that are being developed in the European context; such as those of the '*Agence nationale de la cohésion des territoires*' (ANCT—formerly DATAR, DIACT, CGET…) on the role of city networks and polycentrism in territorial competitiveness, or the different initiatives carried out by networks such as METREX, CITIES (among other) in their progressive phases on the role of cities, urban regions and metropolitan areas/regions in the objective of territorial development, competitiveness and cohesion.
- The above brings us closer to the principle, objective and policy of Territorial Cohesion, in which territorial balance, development and sustainability come together, that has emerged as a new benchmark for planning sustainable spatial development.
- Its way of concretizing is the integration of physical and economic planning, giving rise to a 'neo-comprehensive' style of planning (Farinós and Milder 2006: 183).[12] This constitutes the main challenge to continue advancing towards a better and clear relationship between Spatial/Regional planning, which seems to have turned in favour of the second, as Faludi (2010) pointed out, for which Cohesion Policy has provided instruments, procedures and funds: e.g. shared spatial visions, CLLDs, ITIs, Integrated Sustainable Urban Development Strategies (ISUDs) and Local Urban Agendas.

However, getting to put into practice the priorities set out in the TA 2030 and its action plan depends on the commitment of the States and their different administrations and territorial stakeholders, and not so much from the European institutions. The implementation of TA2030 is based on multilevel informal cooperation between Member States, sub-national authorities, the European Commission, the European Parliament, the European Committee of the Regions, the European Economic and Social Committee, the European Investment Bank and other relevant actors. Its application can benefit from cooperation with those responsible for the Urban Agenda, the New Leipzig Charter, the Cohesion Policy, the Rural Development Policy, the EU Recovery Plan and the EU macro-regional and maritime basins strategies.

Most of the pilot actions do not have specific funding or it is very limited. Therefore, the partners of each pilot action participate mainly with their own resources, and their commitment is driven by expectations that they will be able to benefit from the work in the pilot action using the results later as performance criteria for the application and use of Cohesion Funds in national policies, plans and programmes. This clearly differentiates it from what happens with urban initiatives, which have an allocation of 8% of the EFRD funds of each State in the current programming period 2021–2027 (three points more than in the previous one). This may entail a risk of involution, once again, towards a Regional Economic Development approach to planning to the detriment of Spatial Planning with territorial approach.

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[12] Mixture of the regional economic development style of planning (of French inspiration, later applied to the European Regional Policy of 1988) and the integral or comprehensive style (of clear German and Dutch inspiration, characterized by the presence of a clear hierarchy of plans at different levels with good coordination among them, in which the activity of the public sector is coordinated with that of other sectors) specifically interested in territorial coordination.

8.5 How Spatial Plans Help to Territorial Cohesion; and How EU Cohesion Policy Helps National Spatial Planning Systems

The paradox continues that the right to planning is recognized by the United Nations but, nevertheless, high-level documents, such as on Climate Change policy (Serrano, 2022), and others such as at the European level, barely mention the role of Spatial Planning.

Within the current 'new big transition' (ecological, economic, social, urban, feminist, democratic…) territorial dimension and policies play a key role defining futures in: new economic development model, new spatial models/trends, and new geopolitics (both at internal as well as external level—EU in the World-). Multilevel cooperation and coordination from local to EU level is the way to reinforce territorial cohesion. It should be the strongest differential EU character, instead of general-global common models based on traditional modern State's organization and carbonic economic development; by deepening into more consolidated relationships among Spatial Planning, Territorial Cohesion and values behind the EU Project.

Improving Territorial Cohesion implies improving coordination between sectoral and territorial policies as well as coherence between territorial interventions. The coordination of sectoral and territorial policies must be considered as a key issue. Coordination must occur from the beginning. Ideally, territorial development policies (Ferrão 2015) should be framed in strategies based on spatial planning, integrating the forecasts of sectoral policies with a significant impact on the territory. Sectoral policies should, first of all, stick to territorial strategies. Otherwise, some aspects of sectoral policies may have unwanted effects for the territory, as demonstrated in the ESPON program. In addition, in these sectoral policies, a transversal participation of the representatives of the integrated territorial policy should be promoted, in all phases: formulation, ex-ante evaluation, implementation and subsequent evaluation of sectoral policies.

And how can the coordination of sectoral and territorial policies be improved? The answer is clear, although ambitious: based on a new sustainable territorial development policy and Strategic Spatial Planning that combines 'aménagement', development and coordination following a participative method. Some authors such as Albrechts (2006) have been speaking not only about strategic planning but also about strategic projects, and the need for their organized interrelation in order to promote socio-territorial innovations.

Spatial Planning is understood as a dynamic process that involves the entire community and is oriented towards achieving sustainable, competitive and socially cohesive development. It is both a scientific discipline, an administrative technique and a policy aimed at establishing criteria and instruments, normative or not, that guide and regulate actions on the territory.

The big question is to what extent planning instruments and their practice really make it possible to achieve the objective of combining sustainable development with economic growth, respecting the principle of Territorial Cohesion. In this sense, territorial governance is the '*sine qua non*' condition to guarantee a more balanced territorial development and achieve the objective of Territorial Cohesion through the participation of the different stakeholders (public, private, third sector…) that operate at the different scales. All this while maintaining proper coordination (harmonization) when preparing the different territorial cohesion strategies (Spatial Visions) at different levels, from local to European, facilitating a better multilevel relationship based on a common understanding of territorial problems and objectives. Joint discussion on possible scenarios for territorial development can facilitate the reconciliation of different interests. This means recognizing the usefulness and convenience of Strategic Spatial Planning, as a preferred way to make Spatial Planning.

EU Cohesion Policy has promoted progress towards strategic spatial planning. Reform of the Regulation of the Structural Funds of 2013 that governed the 2014–2020 multiannual financial framework (Regulation (EU) No. 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013), did it through figures such as Community-led Local Development (CLLD), Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) and ISUDs. In essence, they respond to the nature of strategic spatial plans for different areas and scales, and with different contents, progressively tending to be more integrated and cross-sectoral. Thus, this strategic approach has been supported, with a comprehensive planning approach (hierarchy of mutually informed plans), paying less attention to the funds and more to the 'what for' (for what purposes/objectives, coherently designed at all scales through guidelines in plans and instruments regulated by law, or simply as agreements between actors, territories and administrations).

This entails the development of new forms of governance. A Cohesion Policy in European mode requires the EU to propose a generic framework that serves as a reference for the different levels and actors. The ESDP document laid the foundations for how first-pillar European policies should take into account the territorial dimension in their (co-financed) investment approaches and objectives in the Member States. After the enlargement of the EU, a new initiative took over, abounding in these same approaches, adapted, updated and completed with new ones in accordance with the new Treaties and circumstances. Thus, since 2004, the new process called "European Territorial Agenda" arose, which since then has been progressively updated according to each new programming period.[13] Already in the current programming

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[13] As we said above, through an intergovernmental cooperation process, initiated in the informal ministerial meeting held in Rotterdam in 2004, which continued during the following Presidencies of Luxembourg, the United Kingdom, Austria and Finland, the ESDP process was subject to revisions and adaptations, giving rise to the "*European Territorial Agenda. Towards a more competitive and sustainable Europe of diverse regions*", agreed on the occasion of the informal Meeting of Ministers on Urban Development and Territorial Cohesion held in Leipzig on 24th–25th May 2007, with the primary aim of reinforcing Territorial Cohesion. Thereafter, and based on a revision of the Leipzig

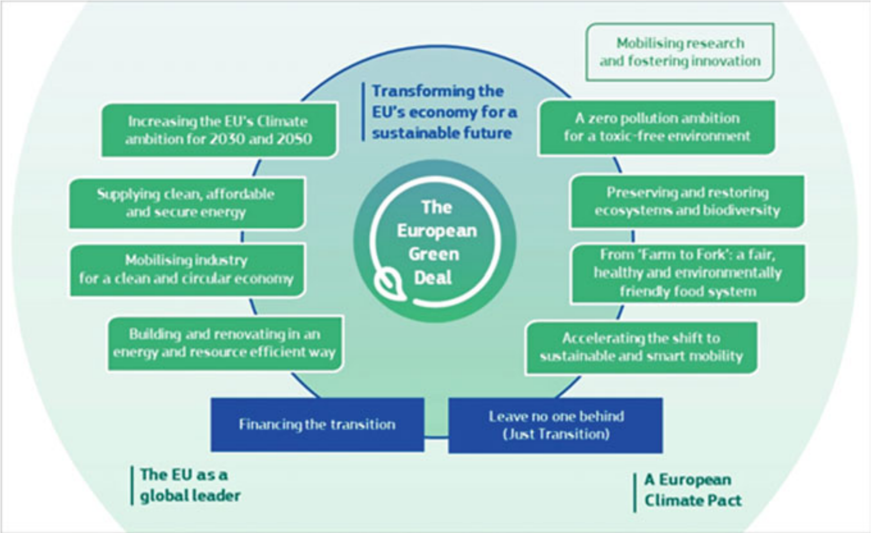
Mobilising research and fostering innovation
Transforming the EU's economy for a sustainable future
Increasing the EU's Climate ambition for 2030 and 2050
A zero pollution ambition for a toxic-free environment
Supplying clean, affordable and secure energy
Preserving and restoring ecosystems and biodiversity
The European Green Deal
Mobilising industry for a clean and circular economy
From 'Farm to Fork': a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food system
Building and renovating in an energy and resource efficient way
Accelerating the shift to sustainable and smart mobility
Financing the transition
Leave no one behind (Just Transition)
The EU as a global leader
A European Climate Pact

Fig. 8.2 The European Green Deal. *Source* http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/1/2019/EN/COM-2019-640-F1-EN-MAIN-PART-1.PDF

period 2021–2027, the German presidency of the EU adopted on 30th November 2020 the new Leipzig Charter on sustainable cities, and launched the new TA 2030, with the intention of making the territory, with a "local-based" approach, the vector of efficiency and quality in the programming of the actions to be carried out within the framework of the new Cohesion Policy.

The TA 2030 guides and underlines the importance of Strategic Spatial Planning, calling for the strengthening of the territorial dimension of sectoral policies at all levels of governance. It seeks to promote an inclusive and sustainable future for all places, and help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Europe (see Fig. 8.2).

In this sense, there should be a tendency to build spatial development projects with heritage focus, based on environmental and cultural reasons. For example, taking advantage of the landscape as an opportunity and value of each town and city, incorporating ecological and landscape restoration to the regenerative practice of territory and the city. Green Infrastructure, Nature Based Solutions and Landscape can help in this regard, taking advantage of the mobilizing role of the European Landscape Convention.

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text taking into account the new conditions and developments in the EU, Hungary was going to prepare a new updated version; a revision carried out in compliance with the provisions of the First Action Program approved at the Azores meeting in 2007, which scheduled it for the first semester of 2011 (point 45 of the European Territorial Agenda).

8.6 Final Remarks and Conclusions

Spatial Planning has been one of the key constituents of State territoriality since the nineteenth century that Foucault (1991) conceptualized as the "governmentalization of the state". But, economic competitiveness is not yet only a national issue but a matter of European importance. This internationalization of spatial policy regimes is associated with the contemporary modes of market economy (Moisio & Luukkonen, 2014). Not only to maintain positions at global level, but also to develop new kind of advantages based on the New Green and Blue Economy, cultural industry and fourth industrial revolution based on ITCs; as well as in order to facilitate a more balanced development among territories (Territorial Cohesion).

At the EU level, this geopolitical interest is also presented today at both levels (internal and external). Within the current 'new big transition' (ecological, economic, social, urban, feminist, democratic… one), territorial dimension (consequently territorial policies and spatial planning) plays a key role in order to define futures in three related and strategic fields: new economic development model, new spatial planning models / trends, new geopolitics (within Europe as well as abroad; EU in the World). These guiding principles for this new model of territorial development should be territorial cohesion and cooperation and governance. Several programs, as ESPON, projects and researchers have explained the adoption of the EU's spatial policy principles and mechanisms through EU policies applied by Member States, mainly Cohesion Policy. The three 'fronts' of action for achieving territorial cohesion as defined in the Green Paper (concentration, connectivity, and cooperation) envisage EU as a uniform spatial entity. Territorial Cohesion, in a green and healthy perspective, should be the core axis. The financial aspect will continue to be central for this objective (New Green Deal and Next GenerationEU Pogram and Multiannual Financial Framework 2021–2027).[14]

Green and healthy Europe, which should be drawn from political struggle and conflict among administrations to become a matter of general interest (both for States and EU) with a very clear territorial character. More than two decades have passed since the ESDP, laying some important foundations for the development of any sectoral policy with territorial impact. However, its application was increasingly intergovernmental and sectoral since then: Territorial Agenda, Regional/Cohesion Policy, methods and measures for Cross-Border development planning as INTERREG, ESPON, Natura 2000, Environment Action Program, LIFE Programs, Strategic Enviromental Assessment (SEA) Directive, Initiatives in European urban development…

How to combine national and subnational levels with EU level, trough cooperation and multilevel coordination seems, again, the way to reinforce Territorial Cohesion as valid alternative for a renewed and strengthened EU Project. National interests (instead regional / local) and reinforced cooperation (intergovernmental) seem to win against Community Method and complementary Open Methods of Coordination. Spatial Planning, this time most clearly related with new / renewed development models (Green and Blue) and new territorial governance routines (in Post-modern States), represent an alternative way to a smarter, healthy, just and cohesive development and territorial and social cohesion.

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[14] See https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/recovery-plan-europe_en (accessed 02.12.22).

For this, an adequate level of maturity of the political system is required, but also of political and territorial culture, supported by an adequate territorial intelligence, which in turn relates to the development of both a sufficient intellectual capital on the territory, of information and territorial indicators with which to be able to recognize the existing territorial dynamics and evaluate the impact that the applied policies have on them.

For this reason, Spatial Planning is claimed as Comprehensive Planning, of a transversal/cross-sectoral nature, as a policy and as a cultural element (territorial culture and planning culture). Sectoral policies (transport, energy, water…) should not replace an integrated territorial policy.

This fully introduces us to the question of administrative coordination, which is once again recognized as a key element and which is necessary when developing a non-conflicting planning at the different levels (from the local to the EU level) with which be able to achieve the planned objectives. Spatial Planning policy has to be understood not only by society, but also, and fundamentally, by administrations themselves, rewarding and disseminating the best practices as a benchmarks. As does, for example, INTERACT and, above all, the European Urban Initiative (Regulation EU 2021/1058 of the European Parliament and of the Council of June 24, 2021 regarding the EFRD and the Cohesion Fund), which encourages synergies between European urban programs such as Innovative Urban Actions, the Urban Agenda for the European Union or exchanges with URBACT, the main program for urban cooperation and exchange of experiences between European cities.

One of the main objectives of the EU is to strengthen social, economic and territorial cohesion, but the growing fracture between regions, with a focus more focused on cities, opens a new scenario in which it is essential to restructure the relationship between urban nodes and rural peripheries, strengthening their interdependencies and favouring greater synergies between both. Adequate territorial cooperation and urban–rural relations are basic conditions for achieving Territorial Cohesion. The new urban–rural relations for better Territorial Cohesion have good support with digitalization.

Territorial Cohesion is made by people; it is not possible without the population. The digital connectivity of the territory, transversally (for people, companies and administrations) and avoiding/correcting the risk of digital divide (between the elderly and the most vulnerable groups) is key to cohesion. The digital infrastructure is today as important as any other basic supply, as were the sanitation networks in the XIXth and XXth centuries. Environmental, urban and spatial planning must take advantage of and know how to anticipate the changes that the scientific-technological revolution entails.

This leads to being able to resize and reclassify the territories, beyond what would be the classic land uses for the activities of the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors. Instead of speaking in terms of sectoral specialisation, one must think of a territorial specialization approach, in line with the instruments and strategies proposed at the EU level (CLLDs, ITIs, Smart Specialization Strategies, ISUDs, Local Urban Agendas, Cross-Border and Macro-Regional Strategies…). More than looking for sectors of aggregate productivity, it is about integrating sectors so that productivity grows in the territory as a whole, with the active involvement of all local stakeholders. This is related to digital culture and the green and blue economy proposed by the European Green Deal; not from a segmented point of view of industries and services, each one on its own, but as a community that offers and that has or can have amalgamated skills.

In rural areas, Spatial Planning, integrating environmental planning and considering the services provided by protected areas, must play a fundamental role in ensuring the maintenance of productive activity; so that landscape and heritage conservation were compatible with suitable well-being level for rural population, who must have equal opportunities than urban people. Only in this way will it be possible to achieve the intended objective of social and territorial cohesion. Territorial Cohesion, for spatial justice, well-being and quality of life, is a matter that the Spatial Planning has traditionally been dealing with, and its future seems linked to it when thinking on socio-territorial dimension of sustainability.

The new realities and the associated spatial consequences must be recognized and integrated into the territory and the city: the predominance of the digital economy, the need for the energy transition, the imposition of new labour relations, etc. Territorial cooperation at different scales (intermunicipal and interregional) constitutes a highly appropriate line of action to strengthen Territorial Cohesion. In order to lead these strategies and inter-territorial relations, it is necessary, together with the political will, the participation and dialogue of all concerned stakeholders; especially in the case of metropolitan areas/regions and cross-border spaces.

Long-term planning bears fruit and contributes to empowering citizens through results, and vice versa, the necessary complicity of stakeholders allows planning to be possible and that it can remain in time. Spatial Planning is a technical, social and political praxis, therefore it requires permanent feedback between theory and practice, between experts and decision-makers, and between the different decision-making scales (from European to local level).

Especially in the case of the cohesion countries, the main recipients of this European policy and associated funds, which have traditionally been focused on land use planning, but which are gradually incorporating Strategic Spatial Planning along with their own traditional approach, thus promoting advances and some innovations, although generally in a timid way. Therefore, attention must continue to be paid to the relationships, still in evolution, between territorial cohesion and smart comprehensive spatial planning; at the level of each State, but under the umbrella of a reinforced idea, objective and principle of Territorial Cohesion at a European level, as a basic piece of the European Union project.

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Part V
Territorial Cooperation and Governance Policies for Territorial Cohesion

Chapter 9

Territorial Cooperation for European Cohesion (In What Measure Can ETC Contribute to Achieving the EU Goal of Territorial Cohesion?)

Martín Guillermo-Ramírez

Abstract Although the single market is at the core of the European Union, borders keep on causing friction to the freedoms of movement and everyday interaction. Most public policies, including economic ones, are designed and implemented within a national framework and end, therefore, at the national boundaries. However, when the citizens' daily life embraces a cross-border territory, they are confronted with fragmented national policies instead of a cohesive and integrative common framework. There have been significant achievements for border regions within an integrated EU, with milestones like Schengen or territorial cooperation and cohesion, but there is a long way to go. Still, the COVID-19 pandemic has also shown how weak these achievements could be towards the free will of nation-states. To be "natural" laboratories of European cohesion and integration, and they have shown they can, cross-border regions need a different approach, being considered functional areas and guaranteed a minimum operativity for daily cross-border activities even in emergency situations. Interreg, the funding arm of European Territorial Cooperation, celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2020. Hundreds of programmes and projects have significantly triggered territorial cohesion across the continent over three decades. Cross-border structures and their networks have made this possible. Other EU instruments like the EGTCs have amplified the opportunities already opened by pioneer Euroregions well before the first earmarking of European funds for territorial cooperation. In particular, border regions today are starting to be seen as laboratories where innovative solutions for cohesion are developed and piloted. In no other territory like a (cross-)border region do citizens daily feel the benefits and the challenges of the European single market, still a utopia in many fields. But its perception in cross-border territories would mean effective cohesion. This chapter discusses how European territorial cooperation (ETC) has managed to be a key factor for territorial cohesion, a crucial but relatively recent component of European cohesion. And how it has overcome many difficulties to progress while notoriously drawing the attention of policymakers (and scholars) as a very genuine, valuable and promising cohesion

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tool. It also discusses the interference with national sovereignty conceptions and how going beyond financial support in search of trust across borders could be a tool of evermore importance.

Keywords European cohesion · Territorial cohesion · Territorial cooperation

9.1 Introduction

The territorial dimension of European integration is widely acknowledged and has been broadly discussed by well-known scholars for a long time (Faludi 2007; Schout and Jordan 2007; Faludi and Peyrony 2011). In his plaidoyer for territorial cohesion, Faludi went through the long-standing vindication of European spatial planning, a significant issue in achieving authentic territorial cohesion. Looking at his conclusions fifteen years later, in a context with an economic crisis, rising migration phenomena, a not yet ended pandemic, and a war in between, his doubts about convincing critical policymakers on the "community added value" of territorial cohesion were premonitory about the long work we had, and we did face during these years.

The use of "we" in this text will refer to the vast network of people working every day for cross-border cooperation (CBC) in Brussels, Berlin, Budapest, Paris, Lisbon, Gronau, and thousands of European border municipalities, regions, Euroregions, Eurodistricts, Eurocities and other cooperation entities (Durà et al 2018). They have pushed forward the interests of European border and cross-border regions for decades, in times of European enthusiasm, but also when a strong national "resistance" rises. In these years, there have been moments of progress but also a permanent return to the starting point when there was a crisis.

Nevertheless, Faludi wrote those conclusions in the times of the failed European Constitution, but the way forward for territorial cohesion to be included in the future Treaty of Lisbon was paved. And as the Hungarian professor based in the Netherlands already mentioned, the Assembly of European Regions (AER) started in 1995 a strong campaign to make it happen (AER 1995). The Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) and other associations of regions and municipalities, such as the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), the Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions (CPMR), or Eurocities, also joined forces and strengthened their coordination during those times. Territoriality was on the agenda, and we all started to move forward. The EU Interreg initiative progressed, and its projects became more sophisticated. The AEBR even began to discuss with the EU institutions, particularly the Parliament and the Commission, the possibility of developing a European legal instrument to solve many obstacles to cooperation, particularly of a legal and administrative nature. These were the first steps of the European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTCs).

Territorial cooperation kept growing in relevance, and territorial cohesion was a concept difficult to define but easy to perceive on the ground, particularly by many millions of Europeans living in border regions. The “battle” to achieve multilevel governance experience across national boundaries continued. Many new cooperation structures have been created, and thousands of projects have been implemented in all EU internal and external border areas. Many obstacles have been solved, but others remain, and new ones have appeared. But cohesion progresses, also territorial cohesion, thanks to the solidarity of the Europeans, the power of subsidiarity and, of course, cooperation.

Throughout this chapter, the question of “how European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) has contributed to territorial cohesion” is addressed. It is done via an analysis of the evolution of ETC, establishing links with EU milestones, namely the Single Market. Section 9.2 debates to what extent the Single Market operates in cross-border territories. Section 9.3 discusses how far political and legal frameworks enrooted on national perspective limit deeper integration in cross-border regions. Section 9.4 presents territorial cooperation as the main tool for achieving territorial cohesion and a success story within European cohesion. A brief conclusions section closes.

9.2 A European Single Market or Just a Stylish Common Market?

The European integration project faces many obstacles at various levels, particularly when the national ones meet at the border: asymmetries, differentials, and multilevel (un)governance, still hinder the opportunities opened by the so-called “Single Market”. The AEBR has always defended the thesis that the Single Market does not exist (yet) when looking at the reality across EU internal borders. It prefers the German word *Binnenmarkt* (internal market). This better describes a construction based on 27 national perspectives—enlarged by several regional administrations with legal competences—operating within the European Union. However, despite more than seventy years of European Communities, national mainstreaming policies and priorities prevail. This is notable, namely by the perspective used by the media to cover European affairs. Even during the most delicate summits of Heads of State and Government, the supreme meetings of the Council, the media address European leaders mostly with domestic questions, despite the discussions at the Council focusing on a joint European perspective (e.g. about vaccines, reconstruction funds, measures to cope with climate change or a smart reaction to the war in Ukraine).

To have a European and cross-border perspective is essential, particularly when debating themes that affect in different manners a specific group of territories with a specific characteristic, e.g. peripheral territories; border regions; rural and/or mountainous areas; sparsely populated territories, etc. Even—or, better said, *especially*—nation-states should continuously make an effort to look at different themes from a cross-border perspective. Such an approach is essential to ensure full national awareness of their territories. A border NUTS3 region cannot be seen merely as a component of a larger NUT2 and part of a country. Instead, it must also be understood as part of a cross-border region, encompassing the neighbouring border region on the other side of the nation's administrative division. Such national awareness of cross-border territories is a *condicio sine qua non* for designing and implementing policies that consider the full extension of the population involved in any cross-border service and, thus, apply the most appropriate measure. The design and implementation of policies affecting a border territory can only be effective if these are done closely with their neighbours. This happens sometimes, and there are various cases of EU member states keeping a systematic approach towards cross-border spatial planning related to areas with a long record of cooperation and CBC structures, specific areas of development, or territories with strategic importance.

Germany and Luxembourg are two examples of "supporters" with very different backgrounds. The German Federal Ministry of Housing, Urban Development and Building (BMWSB)—in collaboration with public and private agencies, universities, research institutions and other stakeholders—has developed the MORO instrument,[1] which promotes model projects to implement a more process-, action- and project-oriented understanding of planning and policy. It supports the practical testing and implementation of innovative spatial planning approaches and instruments in cooperation between science and practice (BBSR 2022). Germany has also been involved very actively in developing the European Territorial Agenda.[2] Luxemburg, with obvious reasons to pay special attention to cross-border dynamics, was the leading promoter of the European Cross-Border Mechanism (ECBM), an instrument to solve cross-border legal incongruencies, which progressed in the Commission and the Parliament, but the Council rejected it. In Luxembourg, a "cross-border metropolisation" process has also been identified, as described by Christophe Sohn and other authors (Sohn and Walter 2009; Decoville and Sohn 2010; Sohn 2012). In other member states, there is a complete lack of interest, and it is tough to find a single department dealing with cross-border issues, perhaps a unit at the Ministry of Finances dealing with the Interreg programme.

We have any possible combination between both extremes, including different distribution of competences between the national, regional and local levels, creating additional asymmetries when interacting across borders. This makes navigation very difficult for border citizens looking for information regarding a particular cross-border service or opportunity. They are pushed again to turn their backs on the possibilities across the border and look at the urban centres in their own countries, including, of course, the capitals. Here we have some phenomena which might be helpful to follow, as they show the situation in many border regions: the continuous exodus from rural to urban areas,[3] despite disruptions like during the pandemic, and the growing awareness about “empty” or “emptying” regions (del Molino 2016).

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[1] *Modellvorhaben der Raumordnung* in German can be translated as Spatial Planning Demonstration Projects.

[2] The European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP), adopted by the Informal Council of Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning in Potsdam in May 1999 (Council 1999), was the genesis of the first European Territorial Agenda, adopted at the Informal Council of Ministers of Urban Development and Cohesion in Leipzig in May 2007 (Council 2007b). And the new Territorial Agenda 2030 was adopted at an (online) Informal Ministerial Meeting in December 2020 (planed in Leipzig) (Council, 2020). These achievements happened during German Presidencies of the Council of the EU (the European Territorial Agenda 2020 was adopted in Gödöllő in May 2011, during a Hungarian Presidency) (Council 2011).

Furthermore, very often, there is a language factor which could be a binding or a separating one. The same or similar language across the border makes cooperation easier, and cohesion happens: Belgian-French border, Galicia-Norte de Portugal, Upper Rhine, Scandinavian and Irish cooperation. Sometimes there is a regional language acting as a bridge—Basque in Basque Country, Navarra (ES) and Nouvelle Aquitaine (FR); Catalonian in Catalonia (ES) and Occitania (FR); Gaelic in the island of Ireland; Sorbian languages in Saxony and Brandenburg (DE), close to Czech and Polish—or a *lingua franca*—*Plattdeutsch* at the DE/NL border, *Fala* at the ES/PT border (Martín Galindo 1999)—facilitating communication and understanding. But sometimes the barrier is cumbersome, and the lack of knowledge of the neighbour’s language has made it traditionally impossible to understand their culture (with devastating effects sometimes). Knowing the neighbours’ languages, understanding their cultures, and accepting and respecting their traditions, religions, procedures, etc., are the first steps to building trust effectively and progressing to further cooperation. The Saar-Moselle Eurodistrict EGTC (DE/FR),[4] the Euregio Egrensis (CZ/DE)[5] and the EUROACE (Alentejo-Centro-Extremadura Euroregion)[6] have developed deep and successful projects to teach the language of their neighbours for the general population and for particular sectors (emergencies personnel, children, …) which have served as multipliers for further cooperation.

It seems that a growing number of (cross-)border regions have made excellent use of Interreg and other European, national or regional funds to promote these essential elements of cross-border collaboration and cooperation, but within the State of Law and as already explained, they are always subject to the fitness with national regulatory frameworks and the approval of national authorities. An excellent example of national “interference” in cooperation is border closing, a prerogative of Member states according to the Schengen Treaty. The first reaction by most nation-states is to remove Schengen and close the border when there is a threat, even if that threat does not know about boundaries, as is the case of viruses and other microbia (Medeiros et al 2021b). Very often, the same border must be opened immediately because essential workers cross it daily to go to their working places in healthcare facilities and other public services across the border, to transport food, fuel and other goods, to study, to the closest shopping, etc. A study published in Nature has questioned the impact of international border closing in controlling the epidemic, while lockdowns seem to have been more effective (Shiraef et al 2022) and, probably, confinement and measures to stop close interpersonal contact were much more efficient.

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[3] The media echoed on 15 November 2022 the birth of *Damián*, a Dominican baby who symbolically broke the barrier of 8 Billion inhabitants on Earth (El País 2022). 9.7 billion humans are foreseen in 2050 and around 11 billion by the end of this century, according to the projections of the UN Population Division (UN DESA’s Population Division 2022). And in its *World Cities Report 2022*, UN Habitat expects the world will continue to urbanise over the next three decades, from 56% of the total population in 2021 to 68% in 2050 (UN Habitat 2022).

[4] This EGTC has set interculturality and bilingualism as the key to uniting citizens in the cross-border region. Therefore they have started, coordinated or taken part in various projects and actions in this field: https://www.saarmoselle.org/fr/interculturalite-et-bilinguisme.html (last retrieved on 28 November 2022).

[5] The Euregio Egrensis has developed for more than 15 years a *Sprachoffensive*, raising public awareness and promoting language competences in the DE/CZ cross-border area: https://www.euregio-egrensis.de/sprachoffensive.htm (last retrieved on 28 November 2022).

[6] The *Portugal Plan* of the regional government of Extremadura (ES), aimed to facilitate the teaching of Portuguese language in Primary Education, is operational since the school year 2010–2011.

In many border areas, cross-border commuters had to react against too strong (or asymmetric) measures across national boundaries, bypassing existing cross-border governance structures and restricting cross-border flows (Böhm 2021). They have shown, particularly during the pandemic, that citizens go well beyond institutions, also regarding European integration, and have started to create a sort of cross-border civil society.

That feeling was already present for decades in various European Western borders, particularly in the internal and external borders of the BENELUX, the borders along the Rhine River, the Alps and the Pyrenees, and in twin cities such as Tornio-Haparanda (FI/SE), or those at the Spanish-Portuguese border (called *Eurocities*). The latter has been the most stable European border for many centuries. Besides the cases of Ayamonte (ES) and Vila Real de Santo António (PT) right south, on both sides of the Guadalquivir River, or Badajoz (ES) and Elvas (PT) across the Guadiana, there is a particular cooperation in the northern part of the border, where two generations of Eurocities have been described, with a relevant impact in the daily life of the citizens (Trillo Santamaría et al 2021).

However, the promotion of these relationships is often far from the priorities of national authorities, agencies, etc., which could facilitate them enormously. These priorities make every border different, with a variety of approaches to similar situations, which shows very well the lack of a “single market” and other “single” approaches within the European common market when dealing with numerous daily situations for border citizens, a third of Europeans. Various cases of *b-solutions* well document this. *b-solutions* is a Commission initiative implemented by the AEBR, with ninety cases already studied and published (AEBR–EC 2020a; 2020b, 2021a), proposing solutions to legal and administrative obstacles to cross-border cooperation. Therefore, there is a need for inputs from the ground, preferably with a bottom-up dynamic and a multilevel governance approach, which could influence major decisions. The supranational level seems to be well aware of the interest in promoting subsidiarity and multilevel governance, but the periphery is still the periphery in national terms.

9.3 A "Defective" Cohesion or just Too Much National Sovereignty?

Perhaps it is too much calling "defective" such a beautiful concept as cohesion. The European Structural Funds and the Cohesion Policy have rendered an enormous input to the European project that cannot be disdained, and territorial cooperation and cohesion can show many examples. However, many scholars are rethinking (Marques et al 2018) or re-conceptualising territorial cohesion (Jones et al 2018), proposing a better definition of cohesion (Dao et al 2017) or discussing the mismatch between those definitions and the understanding of public decision-makers (Chamusca et al 2022). The Treaty of Lisbon created many expectations around European cohesion and territorial cooperation. However, it is essential to draw the reader's attention to the fact that cohesion, particularly territorial cohesion, is still a hostage of national mainstream policies, wishes or desires. Cohesion Policy has been one of the main confrontation fields for the European Commission and the member states: the net EU budget contributors have demanded more accountability and stricter conditionality. At the same time, the European Commission tried to influence conditionality to facilitate fiscal and structural reform in recipient countries (Crescenzi et al 2020). European efforts have not made possible an actual "place-based approach" yet, using the famous Fabrizio Barca's words, "to meeting European Union challenges and expectations" (Barca 2009). And Faludi has clearly expressed how problematic the achievement of territorial cohesion in Europe is due to the territoriality of member states (Faludi 2016). Many authors are referring to the difficulties of implementing the subsidiarity principle due to the confusion created by the number of different aims and objectives (Begg 2010), the top-down structure dominated by EU and national actors (Moodie et al 2021), and the competing interpretations by different actors (Van Kersbergen and Verbeek 2004).

This paper presents territorial cooperation as a pillar of territorial cohesion. Commissioner Danuta Hübner initiated a process to consolidate the term "cohesion" as a central pillar of the European narrative but also highlighted its territorial dimension with the *Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion* (EC 2008), another milestone for territorial cooperation and cohesion. AEBR reacted both to the draft (AEBR 2008b) and the final versions of the Green Paper (AEBR 2009a), stressing the need for this policy to be implemented in the whole territory of the union as a horizontal objective (and challenge) beyond economic and social cohesion. It also asked for consistent implementation of the bottom-up principle with due regard for subsidiarity and partnership. On the other hand, territorial cohesion offers the opportunity to strengthen the role of regional and local authorities and other actors in implementing EU policies. It already warned about the necessary improvement of the understanding of territorial cohesion by including specific quantitative and qualitative indicators. This critical debate on the future of territorial cohesion, but also its impact on the whole European project, was brilliantly closed by the Barca Report with his above-mentioned fortunate place-based concept (Barca 2009), but also entailing much more food for thought for European, national, regional and local authorities. AEBR reacted accordingly, welcoming the report and its strong focus on the territorial dimension of cohesion, the inclusion of all stakeholders and the need for a sustainable strategy, but also some degree of flexibility to meet specific challenges for some particular territories such as border, mountain and maritime regions (AEBR 2009b). An exchange of correspondence with the author followed, where both confirmed the need to focus on clear objectives and outcomes relevant not only to public administrators and policymakers but also to the life of citizens.

We must admit that the whole issue was built upon the foundations of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) (Council 1999) and subsequent series of European Territorial Agendas, fundamental pieces of a sophisticated (but rudimentarily binding) European spatial planning (ESP). Many scholars and researchers are demanding a novel European Spatial Planning vision, from the already mentioned Andreas Faludi to Eduardo Medeiros, who proposed building this vision around the main pillars and dimensions of territorial development and cohesion (Medeiros 2017a). He also suggested a new set of guidelines and principles for the European Cohesion Policy after 2020, including sound territorially driven strategies and a stronger focus on large-impact transnational projects and cross-border cooperation programmes. In the end, he demanded that "the incorporation of an ESP vision into the EU policy agenda design would be regarded as an additional natural milestone for this recognition of the need to think and act strategically from a transnational territorial perspective" (Medeiros 2017a, pp. 1871–1872).

Medeiros has extensively analysed and compared CBC processes at the Swedish-Norwegian and Spanish-Portuguese borders, and has also written very much on the need to place European territorial cooperation at the heart of EU cohesion policy, stressing the low amount of EU investment for such a titanic task. He already warned about the need to reduce "persisting barriers and shift the national drive Cohesion Policy's design and implementation rationale into a transnational driven rationale" (Medeiros 2017b). Indeed, he edited a book to uncover the territorial dimension of cohesion, assessing territorial impacts, explaining the notion and role of the 'territorial dimension' and examining cohesion as the main driver of EU territorial development (Medeiros 2017c). A further book in 2018 developed a deeper analysis of the European Territorial Cooperation process in Europe (Medeiros 2018). And Territorial Impact Assessment is another topic of his scientific interest, including models for an easy appraisal (Medeiros 2020). He has also researched and published on the urban dimension of cohesion, transnational cooperation, the Territorial Agenda and, in the last years, on the role of *b-solutions* in solving legal and administrative obstacles to CBC, together with AEBR (Medeiros et al 2021a, 2022).

Following these and other authors, we can see a certain explosion of border, territorial cooperation and cohesion studies. And there are various networks and many regional and local associations working for CBC. But, before this spread, before Interreg, and even before the Madrid Outline Convention of the Council of Europe of 1980, some of the founding papers of our Association in the late sixties and early seventies already asked national authorities, the Council of Europe and the European Communities to think out of the box. It was necessary to start planning seriously across the internal borders of the EU. Attention had to be paid to the role and impact of the capitals and urban agglomerations, the citizens living in and across boundaries, and their local and regional authorities. Viktor Frhr. von Malchus prepared these early papers with other pioneers of European cross-border cooperation (CBC). A summary of the works developed in those times can be found in Chaps. 2 and 3 of the last work together of Jens Gabbe and von Malchus (AEBR 2008a). A strong movement of border regions started in those days. Various waves created a good number of Euroregions and other cross-border structures in a dynamic that still runs and makes possible the design and further development of EU initiatives like Interreg.

But it is also true that the decisive debate on the role of territorial cohesion in regional development was launched in 2004 with the preparation of the *Guellec Report*, which finally became a resolution of the European Parliament, considering territorial cohesion as "the *raison d'être* for regional development policy, (…) based on the principle of equity between citizens, wherever they live in the Union, (…), to achieve genuine multi-level and multi-sectoral governance with enhanced cooperation between territorial actors at the three levels (…) based on the principle of partnership, (…) proposing new territorial indicators, (…), asking for the establishment of a system for the assessment of the impact of EU policies on territorial cohesion (…) and a Community Cohesion Strategy, (…) as well as a White Paper on territorial cohesion, indicating how this objective is to be incorporated in the national strategic plan of each member state" (EP, 2006). It seems pertinent to remind here the contribution of AEBR to the discussions about the draft report at the European Parliament's REGI Committee, the base of the mentioned resolution, where it stressed the need to identify new territorial indicators related to the genuine regional diversity in different geographical situations and their disadvantages, and the need to take into account the ESDP in a future Community Cohesion Strategy. But it also warned of a contradiction between the necessary partnership between urban/sub-urban centres with rural areas and polycentric development on the one hand and an excessive focus on cities as the centre of territorial development and balance on the other (AEBR 2006).

This debate coincided with those related to a new legal instrument for territorial cooperation and the subsequent approval of the first regulation on the EGTC, the European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EP Council 2006), facilitating the definition of various aspects of cooperation. However, some had to wait until 2013 to be reflected in the revised regulation (EP Council 2013). AEBR was involved from scratch in the exchanges on this instrument when it was still focused on Cross-Border Cooperation, though it evolved into a broader territorial cooperation instrument. AEBR had already detected that, despite the deepening of cooperation between local and regional authorities (LRAs) across the whole of Europe, the vastly different national competences, structures and legal systems were still the most common and most significant barriers to cooperation, permitting or preventing LRAs from participating directly in cooperation and, accordingly in the management of the programmes. This also had consequences for the level of decentralisation of the joint management of these EU programmes, the further sophistication of the scope of cooperation and its sustainability. A public law basis for territorial cooperation would definitely and enormously facilitate its spread and consolidation in the whole territory of the EU (AEBR 2004). And, also in those times, AEBR reacted with a series of recommendations for the optimal allocation of all EU funds through their coherence and complementarity (AEBR 2007a). It also stressed the new focus on rural (and other challenging) areas by DG Regio in the regulations of European funds for the following period (2007–2013), published in July 2006, and piloted by Dirk Ahner, Director General of DG REGIO and previously Deputy Director General of DG AGRI (EC, 2006). He promoted an exciting series of consultations on an optimal funding mix to achieve a maximal added value, where LRAs should play a key coordinating role. The future vision of territorial cooperation developed during these debates made it possible for AEBR to define the European, political, institutional, economic and socio-cultural added value of cross-border cooperation (AEBR 2007b).

European Territorial Cooperation was getting a good cruising speed, but the whole EU system faced a new crisis (following and confirming Jean Monnet's well-known aphorism/malediction[7]). After the fiasco of the European Constitution, the intergovernmental conference on reforming the European Treaties started to work in Lisbon in July 2007. Meanwhile, the associations of regions, an already consolidated and well-organized movement around the EU institutions, got involved in the discussions and policy-making processes of a growing number of EU provisions, including the proposed text for a new Treaty. The associations were making excellent use of the opportunities offered by the EU institutions to make their voices heard (or their papers read) by main decision-makers through structured dialogues and direct lobbying (Guillermo Ramírez 2011). Border and mountainous areas, islands and outermost regions, regions and cities, and their allies at the European Parliament, the Commission and, particularly, the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) made possible to include a specific reference to "territorial cohesion" besides economic and social cohesion in the new Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) or Treaty of Lisbon. Article 174 of the TFEU states the aim of the Union to reduce "disparities between the levels of development of the various regions and the backwardness of the least favoured regions" and the particular attention to "be paid to rural areas, areas affected by industrial transition, and regions which suffer from severe and permanent natural or demographic handicaps such as the northernmost regions with very low population density and island, cross-border and mountain regions" (Council 2007a).

Territorial Cohesion and Cooperation (Interreg IV/ETC, V and VI) progressed: the EGTCs regulation was amended (EP Council 2013), and more than eighty structures have been founded since then,[8] cooperation programmes got more sophisticated and ambitious, extended geographically, got better coordination and… survive, under

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[7] *J'ai toujours pensé que l'Europe se ferait dans les crises, et qu'elle serait la somme des solutions apportées à ces crises. Encore fallait-il proposer ces solutions et les faire appliquer* (Monnet 1976).

[8] Official list of registered EGTCs at the EGTCs Platform in the European Committee of the Regions: https://portal.cor.europa.eu/egtc/CoRActivities/Documents/Official%20List%20of%20the%20EGTCs.pdf (last retrieved on 29 November 2022).

Director Generals Walter Defaa and Marc Lemaître, with ups and downs, to its coexistence with an exorbitant chain of crises (financial, migratory, Brexit, COVID-19, the war in Ukraine and its socio-economic effects). After all of these, the EU (including European Cohesion and ETC) seems to be paradoxically but undoubtedly stronger (at least from the point of view of the role of EU institutions in coping with these crises). Evidence of this is the variety of guidelines published by the Commission in the early stages of the pandemic for border management measures to protect health and ensure the availability of goods and essential services[9] and the implementation of Green Lanes,[10] the free movement of workers,[11] EU Emergency Assistance in Cross-Border Cooperation in Healthcare,[12] or passenger rights regulations[13] among others; but especially the vital decisions taken on financial matters, including a huge Reconstruction Fund going much further than in any previous crisis.[14]

And the influence of local and regional authorities has also grown, primarily through their networks and their coordination, with recent achievements such as the Cohesion Alliance, launched by the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) and the leading associations of regions and municipalities in October 2017 during the CoR Presidency of Karl-Heinz Lambertz, former Minister-President of the German-speaking Community of Belgium (and current President of the AEBR). The Alliance worked very hard to show the achievements of European Cohesion, stressing its territorial component, particularly during the discussions about the current Multiannual Financial Framework 2021–2027 and the Reconstruction Fund, reacting to the effects of the pandemic during its various phases and now looking at the war in Ukraine. The Alliance launched at the end of 2017 its first Declaration *#CohesionAlliance for a strong EU cohesion policy beyond 2020* (Cohesion Alliance 2017). It renewed it in July 2020 with a *Declaration 2.0 for a cohesive, sustainable and resilient Europe* to guide its work after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic (Cohesion Alliance 2020). At the moment of writing this chapter, the war in Ukraine and record inflation rates make strengthening cohesion as a fundamental value of the European Union more pressing than ever. During the European Week of Cities and Regions and the plenary session of the CoR in October 2022, the partners of the *#CohesionAlliance* have reaffirmed "their commitment to reinforce cohesion policy and increase the territorial impact of all EU investments to make them fit for Europe's long-term challenges" (Cohesion Alliance 2022; CoR 2022a).

The Cohesion Alliance has inspired other alliances of regions and municipalities, for instance, for the Reconstruction of Ukraine (CoR 2022b), or the Alliance for Cross-Border Citizens by the MOT, AEBR, CESCI and the CoR's EGTCs Platform, which led to a resolution of the plenary of the CoR on the future of cross-border cooperation (CoR 2021). These alliances are practical demonstrations of the effects of joint networking by various European associations. Their analyses also show the need to keep pushing through the EU institutions and any forum to protect European cohesion and territorial cooperation and cohesion within it.

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[9] Official Journal of the European Union (2020/C 86 I/01–04), 16 March 2020.

[10] Official Journal of the European Union (2020/C 96 I/01–07), 24 March 2020.

[11] Official Journal of the European Union (2020/C 102 I/12–14), 30 March 2020.

[12] Official Journal of the European Union (2020/C 111 I/01–05), 3 April 2020.

[13] Official Journal of the European Union (2020/C 89 I/01–08), 18 March 2020.

[14] Council Regulation (EU) 2020/2094 of 14 December 2020 establishing a European Union Recovery Instrument to support the recovery in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis, Official Journal of the European Union (2020/L 433 I/23–27), 22 December 2020.

Every new budget (fortunately, this happens every seven years) and every time European funds are under discussion, there needs to be a vigorous defence of European cohesion and territorial cooperation. These are the general discussions on cohesion, but what happens when territorial cooperation details are discussed? In many cases, the debates might last for years. The first discussions on Interreg took a long time during the eighties, and the same happened with the EGTCs in the first years of this millennium. And other territorial instruments have followed, such as Integrated Territorial Investments (ITIs), which were very welcomed. There are very good ITI practices all over Europe. Still, they have been tough to implement across national borders due to enormous administrative and legal obstacles. Only one has been implemented "cross-border" so far, at the Italian-Slovenian border, by the GO EGTC (BFP 2021). The same happened with Community-Lead Local Development (CLLD) across borders, where only one cross-border case is known between Austria and Italy (ELARD 2022). But the cross-border fiasco with these instruments has not been so disappointing like the one of the ECBM, designed to solve many legal impediments for cross-border cooperation, which received a firm rejection by some member states. There is much pedagogy to be done regarding the practical benefits of European cohesion, including territorial cohesion and, in particular, cross-border cooperation.

The experience so far with territorial instruments which are "classics" today, such as Interreg or EGTCs, should drive our discussions on new territorial policy tools. It will be impossible to avoid the "national" barriers to implementing any EU instrument, and we should be able to demonstrate its benefits beforehand. When they are successful, the "added value" of territorial cooperation and cohesion emerges notoriously. This can be seen in successful interventions of Interreg and related instruments such as the EGTCs in the daily operation of public services like the cross-border hospital of Cerdanya in Puigcerdá, at the Spanish-French border (Berzi and Durà Guimerà 2017, 2020, 2021; Euractiv 2021). And there are similar services rendered by regional public institutions, such as the hospital of Gmünd in Lower Austria, serving an important catchment area including its "twin" city České Velenice and surrounding Czech territory (Böhm and Pysz 2019). There are other cases of solid cross-border integration or, at least, coordination of services, like the seven ZOAST (Zones of Organised Access to Cross-border Healthcare) at the Belgian-French border from Dunkirk to Arlon (OFBS 2022). And many more services in other fields (education, labour, trade, …) are implemented daily across borders.

A fascinating analysis started by the European Spatial Policy Observation Network (ESPON) in 2018 was the base of an interesting policy paper on Cross-Border Public Services (CPS) (ESPON 2019). The inventory of CPS has recently been updated into CPS 2.0 in a coordinated effort with the Commission's DG REGIO and other stakeholders (ESPON 2022), showing the complexity and, in some cases, the sophistication of these CPS. From our point of view, looking at the experience of border regions (and municipalities and citizens), the CPS 2.0 inventory includes many arguments to affirm that European territorial cooperation has been a key factor in increasing the cohesion of territories across national boundaries in terms of accessibility, mobility, and increased opportunities for citizens living very often in remote or at least, peripheral areas.

ESPON has been an extraordinary support since its start during Interreg III (2000–2006) to define and measure the concept of "territorial cohesion". However, Abrahams (2014) reviewed several ESPON projects and showed how complex and uncertain these definitions are. In the same paper, the author analyses national, regional and local government responses to the 2008 Green paper showing that, "whilst a clear and coherent definition has not been established, this concept is already operationalised in different policy frameworks and cannot be separated from them" (Abrahams 2014: 2153). Bringing this together, he argues "that users of such concepts ought to approach the issue differently, through a pragmatic line of enquiry: one that asks what territorial cohesion does, what it might do and how it might affect what other concepts, practices and materials do" (Abrahams 2014: 2153).

There is good and bad news. The bad: all institutions warned a long time ago about the rise of nationalist feelings and Euro-scepticism. And the good: the series of common reactions during the severe disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has shown a much stronger EU, and cohesion has survived these disruptions. Various meetings of main stakeholders with the Commissioner in charge, Elisa Ferreira, within the Cohesion and the CB Citizens Alliances have consistently shown the Commission's explicit support to Cohesion. The same can be said of the Parliament, particularly the REGI Committee. Its chairman, Younous Omarjee, has repeatedly expressed his clear support. But when main discussions come (i.e. the allocation of funds), it is all about national governments playing their cards in the Council and the structured meetings with other institutions (*trilogues*). In one of the main debates before the pandemic, a group of "friends of cohesion" (BG, CY, CZ, EE, ES, GR, HR, HU, LT, LV, MT, PL, PT, RO, SI and SK), the "frugal five" (AT, DE, DK, NL and SE), "other" (BE, FI, FR, IE, IT, and LU) and the UK got consolidated. This distribution might have changed during the pandemic, and the statements of President von der Leyen about the importance of cohesion (when this, and also the Common Agricultural Policy, were questioned towards new priorities and policies) seem to have had a significant effect. The discussions about the Recovery Package showed new divisions, but overall, a new and reinforced commitment of the 27. Many previous red lines were crossed in financial terms, and the EU showed a much stronger capacity than in previous debates. The same can be said about the efforts to develop safe and effective vaccines, among other measures to control the pandemic. In the same discussions about the suitability of cohesion to remain substantially in the EU budget, territorial cooperation (Interreg) was defined as an "engine" of regional cooperation, even in need of more simplification. By the way, the regular budget for ETC has decreased in the current programming period (2021–2027), and there are no signs that national reconstruction plans have considered territorial cooperation initiatives to allocate the additional reconstruction funds.

As already highlighted, all decisions are finally taken with national eyes, as was the case of the above-mentioned ECBM or the useless fever of border closings during the first waves of the pandemic. The European Cross-Border Mechanism resulted from a series of reflections, workshops, lobby meetings, etc., started by the Government of Luxemburg in 2015 when preparing for their Presidency and the 25th Anniversary of Interreg. Precisely, various determinant initiatives started in Belval in September 2015 during those celebrations: the Commission's Cross-Border Review and its outputs (the Communication of 2017, *b-solutions*, the Report of 2021) and the design of a "European CB Convention", which finally became the ECBM. The *Mission Operationnelle Transfrontalière* (MOT) worked very closely with Luxemburg, the French Government and other national representatives in Brussels, together with the AEBR, CESCI, the EGTCs platform and other key stakeholders, to develop this instrument. The European Commission proposed a regulation in May 2018 (EC 2018). This proposal was welcomed by border and cross-border regions and their networks, by the Parliament, and by the academic community too. Some even talked about a "paradigm shift, empowering border areas to manage their own integration and institutionalising a political pathway for resolving specific legal or administrative obstacles" (Engl and Evrard 2020: 1). And then, the Council decided to freeze it and gave it back to the Commission. There are still voices at the European Parliament asking for such an instrument, perhaps a simplified version with a different name. We might see a revival of the ECBM in 2023–2024.

A revision of major provisions, such as Schengen and even the Treaty of Lisbon, have also been considered during the Conference on the Future of Europe (COFE).[15] These could be the following chapters of this thrilling story. The experience with the COVID-19 pandemic has shown the need to protect European Cohesion and, particularly, those achievements with a special meaning for challenged regions such as (cross-)border areas, where a substantial territorial impact has taken place and could be expected in terms of cohesion (Medeiros, 2020; Ocskay, 2020). The war in Ukraine and its unpredictable consequences might put everything under a big question mark, but we expect the EU will respond again with intelligence and global awareness. In the meantime, it has told us a lot about the cross-border territories around Ukraine, particularly those with the EU in Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania (but also those with the Russian Federation, sadly). Some of these borders were studied before the pandemic and the war, as in the 2017 special publication of the Regional Studies Association on the Polish-Ukrainian borderland, coordinated by Prof. Andrzej Jakubowski and team (Jakubowski et al 2017). It would be interesting to revisit their conclusions once the war is over. And it would also be very useful to explore the effects of the latest crises on the willingness and understanding of cross-border cooperation in all cross-border areas.

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[15] The COFE was a citizen-led series of debates from April 2021 to May 2022 that enabled people from across the continent to share their ideas about our common future through a Multilingual Digital Platform. Its conclusions are presented in a final report. More information: https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/new-push-european-democracy/conference-future-europe_en.

9.4 Give Cohesion a Chance: European Territorial Cooperation

As explained in the previous sections, there have been significant achievements for border regions within an integrated EU, with milestones like Schengen or territorial cooperation and cohesion. However, there is still a long way to go. Crises such as those triggered by the terrorist attacks, the migration phenomena and the COVID-19 pandemic have also shown how weak these achievements could be towards the free will of nation-states to decide on border closings.

Despite all of this, decentralisation and subsidiarity seemed to have progressed reasonably well until the pandemic and the war, when Europe reinforced itself, but covidfencing (Medeiros et al 2021b) and other rebordering processes based on strong domestic security governance (Gruszczak 2022; Lara and Laine 2022) might have turn globalisation into a more nationalistic new era. Therefore, leading trends could drive cross-border areas far from their current efforts to consolidate existing processes to generate trust and closer relationships across borders, such as people-to-people projects and small-project funds. AEBR has repeatedly warned that there is a need to protect cohesion and its elements. In its position paper on the importance of cohesion policy for the future of the EU, it highlighted the role of this horizontal EU Policy, involving all regions and citizens of the Union in a huge exercise of flexibility to respond to the variety of regional challenges, in particular structural weaknesses and limited competitiveness. It already alerted to the risk of concentration on a few priorities, the danger of re-nationalisation of certain policy areas, and the need to keep subsidiarity and partnership as indispensable elements of EU governance (AEBR 2016, 2018). And there is an extraordinary cost and risk of non-cohesion, analysed by the CoR in various own initiative opinions (CoR 2017, 2018). Furthermore, in the Cohesion Forums, a gathering of stakeholders and institutions organized every several years following the publication of the Cohesion Reports, many beautiful declarations are made. Still, they seem to have little impact on mainstream national policies.

Territorial cohesion is a very important pillar of European Cohesion, as it has already been explained, and territorial cooperation is an instrument of utmost importance for various reasons, but mainly due to its direct effect on the citizens. Many further developments of the Union can be explored and tested in cross-border regions. However, to be "natural" laboratories of European cohesion and integration, and they have shown they can, cross-border regions need a different approach by decision-makers, being considered functional areas and guaranteed a minimum operativity for daily cross-border activities even in emergency situations. Interreg, the funding arm of European Territorial Cooperation, celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2020. Hundreds of programmes and projects have been a significant trigger for territorial cohesion across the continent over three decades. Cross-border structures and their networks have made this possible. Other EU instruments like the EGTCs have amplified the opportunities already opened by pioneer Euroregions well before the first earmarking of European funds for territorial cooperation.

The new EU programming period 2021–2027 has started with a dynamic of destruction and reconstruction, which is becoming difficult to handle, but the experience shows that it should not be impossible. Some forces are working in favour of a deeper EU cohesion, such as the "cohesion friends", some Commission's departments and Parliament's committees, the European Committee of the Regions and the associations of local and regional authorities. But these coexist with nationalistic trends in various countries (DK, HU, IT, NL, PL, SE, SK) in a framework which has become much more complicated for European cohesion with the pandemic and the war in Ukraine. However, organisations and institutions like the AEBR (Association of European Border Regions) in Gronau and Berlin, the MOT (*Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière*) in Paris, the CESCI (Central European Services for Cross-Border Integration) in Budapest, the TEIN (Trans-frontier Euro-Institut Network) in Strasburg, the EGTCs Platform at the CoR, the European Commission's DG Regio's Border Focal Point, TESIM, the REGI Committee, a few Member States, many regions, thousands of municipalities and millions of citizens know very well the benefits of ETC.

Border regions today are starting to be seen as testing grounds where innovative solutions for cohesion are developed and piloted. In no other territory like a (cross-)border region do citizens daily feel the benefits and the challenges of the European single market, still a utopia in many fields. But its perception in cross-border territories would mean effective cohesion. Perhaps tools to assess territorial impact like those designed by Eduardo Medeiros and other researchers, and the different instruments designed under ESPON, implemented by Interact, and many more initiatives to facilitate cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation by many programmes and projects all over Europe (in a very broad sense) are the solution to the next phase of EU integration with more territorial interaction, solidarity, subsidiarity and participation.

There is a very utilised argument based on a study of the Politecnico di Milano exploring the impact of CBC on growth. It says that by reducing a fifth of legal and administrative border obstacles to cooperation, the GDP would grow almost 2% in those regions (Politecnico di Milano EC 2017). Furthermore, a robust definition and identification of CB functional areas appear as a major paradigm of EU policies towards cross-border areas (Jakubowski et al 2021). The recent CB Public Services (CPS) inventory is already in place (ESPON 2022), which might have a problematic continuation if CB integration does not progress. There are many more qualitative arguments in favour of more cooperation, which can be found by individually analysing the more than 1,500 CPS identified, and the personal experiences of many European citizens behind them. The same can be said of more than a hundred *b-solutions*' cases identified so far, with many personal stories related to the border and the legal and administrative obstacles identified. Some of these personal experiences have been compiled by the Commission and AEBR in a story-telling publication (AEBR–EC 2021b). But the political will at the national level (depending on a very variable environment) always has the last word.

In any case, measuring territorial cohesion is possible if anchored in the policy context (Zaucha and Böhme 2019), and there are interesting indicators designed to measure performance in varied circumstances. We are looking forward to a new generation of assessments and evaluations of territorial cooperation, making use of a growing amount of data (though not always available) which might drive policy-making in Europe with a higher territorial approach towards deeper and sustained integration.

9.5 Conclusion

I have tried to answer in this chapter the question about to what extent European territorial cooperation (ETC) contributes to achieving the EU goal of Territorial Cohesion and, thus, adding value to European Cohesion. In that sense, I hope to have demonstrated or, at least, increased the readers' awareness about the very relevant role that territorial cohesion plays as a main pillar of European cohesion and the basement of the European House. Territorial cooperation is the main tool for territorial cohesion and cross-border cooperation has particularly bridged gaps and healed or contributed to healing many European "scars of History", as we frequently refer to our borders.

Territorial cooperation has greatly developed in most European regions, and many successful experiences in a core group of regions since the late fifties of the past century have served to launch further programmes in many more regions which have enjoyed and implemented this knowledge, adapting it to their own circumstances. Then, when the efforts to promote the knowledge and understanding of the neighbour in the early stages of cooperation are crowned with success, this produces a dividend in terms of mutual trust, a basic ingredient to undertake more sophisticated cooperation initiatives. And the overall success of such an extraordinary amount of European territorial initiatives, as we can find in the successive editions of Interreg since 1990, can only reinforce the final objective of European integration on a daily basis.

This territorial experience accumulated during the last decades has transcended our continent, inspiring other processes in many border regions of South and Central America, where they face specific but also similar challenges. During more than ten years, a systematic exchange of experiences, field works, and theoretical approaches have developed between Europe and the Americas. Currently, it is quite common to see groups of overseas stakeholders visiting European initiatives in most EU internal land borders, and vice versa, as well as the number of joint transatlantic projects growing every year. On the other hand, various African regions are also developing interesting processes, despite their numerous challenges and threats.

In all cases, it is quite evident that supranational and intergovernmental processes (such as the EU, Mercosur, the Andean Community, the Central American Integration System or the African Union and the African Regional Economic Communities) seem to be the perfect contexts to host, support and implement integrated structural initiatives to build up territorial cooperation processes, which need of a dynamic bottom-up and top-down coordination. This means that territorial cooperation processes, to be successful, need to count on the active involvement and complicity of the nation-states involved. In the end, it is about effective multilevel governance.

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Chapter 10
Cross-Territorial Governance via EGTCs for Territorial Cohesion

Gyula Ocskay and James W. Scott

Abstract The chapter discusses the governance aspect of territorial cohesion in the EU which itself is considered as a genuine model of multi-level governance (MLG). During the last 70 years, the EU managed to generate a new discourse on geographic space opposing the nation-state model profoundly connected to the concept of 'territoriality' inherited from the modernity. The EU challenges this modernist concept by creating alternative discourses on space represented by a diverse set of governance structures, including the criss-crossing international (European Union, Schengen Zone, Monetary Union, etc.) the transnational (macro-regional strategies) and the local/regional level (Euroregions, twin-cities, European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation, i.e. EGTC). In this chapter, the authors position the EGTC within the MLG system of the EU with a focus on the role of the groupings in re-shaping the modernist concept of territoriality (marked with strictly protected borders) by creating a new dimension of cross-border spatial integration stretching over administrative borders. When doing this, the EGTCs contribute to the re-interpretation of European space and generate a new discourse on territoriality—within the frames of a new approach to territorial cohesion.

Keywords EGTC · Multi-level governance · Territorial cohesion · Discourse theory · Soft spaces

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10.1 Introduction

The European Union (EU) is considered as the most successful model of supranational integration in the world. In compliance with the intentions of the founding fathers, the multi-level governance (MLG) system of the EU ensures both the frames for reconciliation and building mutual trust and the decision-making processes guaranteeing the economic competitiveness of the Old Continent in global competition. The EU integration process, past 70 years, represents a peaceful and prosperous period in the history of Europe which is a real rarity—especially after the age of fierce nationalism fuelled by the nation-state paradigm.

Borders and border regions play an important role in overcoming the difficulties generated by the so-called "Westphalian system" of sovereign nation-states. Border scholars share the view that it was the Westphalian Treaty making an end to the Thirty Years War in 1648 which triggered the development of strictly guarded and fixed borders (Diener and Hagen 2012; Popescu 2012; Peyrony 2020). When fostering the Single Market and creating the frames for reconciliation and peaceful co-existence, the initiators of European integration clearly challenged the nation-state system with its territorially bound jurisdictions marked and demarcated by state borders. "Within this context, border regions are explicitly understood to be important elements within European integration policies by representing potentially flexible vehicles with which to manage conflict and facilitate collective action in the management of social, economic and environmental issues" (Scott 2020: 69). What is more, borderlands and cross-border initiatives are widely seen as "laboratories" (Kramsch and Hooper 2004; Decoville and Durand 2018) and "micro-laboratories" (Ulrich 2016; Medeiros 2020) of European integration (as we will see, not only laboratories but they are also seismographs thereof). This chapter focuses on the governance aspect and its most recent achievements of this integrating mission of border regions within the framework of Cohesion Policy, and its relevance to EU territorial cohesion processes (Medeiros 2016).

The tool-kit of Cohesion Policy includes as means (1) legal harmonisation facilitating socio-economic integration through the acquis communautaire; (2) the Schengen Area promoting free internal movement within the EU; (3) financial incentives provided by the ESIF Funds, and especially the Interreg programmes; (4) a governance framework of MLG with its vertical (see the principle of subsidiarity) and horizontal (see the European Territorial Cooperation objective) solutions (CoR 2009; Ulrich 2021). The European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) belongs to the last group of solutions which opened a brand-new perspective for diminishing the separating effects of the state borders through governance.

This chapter is aimed at investigating the role of the EGTCs established so far in boosting territorial cohesion. For this purpose, we need to clarify the conceptual frameworks within which the EGTC as an innovative governance solution can contribute to the EU objectives of territorial cohesion—including the impacts of the most recent crises challenging the integration project as a whole.

10.2 Conceptual Framework

The authors discuss the topic in the conceptual frameworks of constructivist discourse theory, new regionalism and network governance theory, all emerging in the late 1980s, thus creating the conditions for the spread of the EGTC tool.

10.2.1 Constructivist Discourse Theory

The "foundations" of post-positivist discourse theory have been laid down by (postmodernist) French thinkers like Derrida, Foucault, Henri Lefebvre, Laclau and Mouffe within the context of the so-called "argumentative turn" (Hajer 1993; Atkinson et al. 2011), "textual turn" (Paasi 2005) or "constructivist turn" (van Houtum 2000). Unlike the positivist approach which considered language as a neutral means utilised to describe the world (see the linguistic turn triggered by Gottlob Frege and the analytical philosophers), for social constructivist theorists, language becomes "a medium, a system of signification through which actors not simply describe but create the world" (Hajer 1993: 44). Accordingly, also spatial relations and spatial formations like borders are constructed (Lefebvre 1991; Paasi 2005; Soja 2009). Consequently, they are rather social than natural phenomena (van Houtum 2000). Spatial formations are generated through so-called discourses which are defined "as an ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categories through which meaning is given to phenomena" (Hajer 1993: 45); a "shared way of understanding the world" making it possible to interpret "bits of information and put them together into coherent stories…" (Dryzek 1997: 8—cited by Torfing 2014: 294). Not only do human beings understand and interpret the world around them through different texts but they also construct, de- and re-construct the world through their discursive practices (Popescu 2012).

Discourse theory is based on the assumption that discourse and power are intertwined phenomena. As Foucault put it: "… in every society the production of discourse at once is controlled, selected, organised and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality […]" as "we do not have the right to say everything […] we cannot speak of just anything in any circumstances whatever, and […] not everyone has the right to speak of anything whatever" (Foucault 1981: 52). The way, how human beings discover and interpret the world is determined by "discourse structuration" (Hajer 1993: 46) which means that discourse is not only about language and knowledge but also about institutions, sciences, bureaucracy, legislation, procedures and practices (Hajer 1993; Newman and Paasi 1998; Powers 2007; Atkinson et al. 2011; Torfing 2014). Not only does "discourse produces its own 'regime of truth' in which knowledge and power are inextricably bound together", but also "both policy and polity are dependent on the outcome of discursive interactions" (Atkinson et al. 2011: 119; 121). If a discourse is widely shared in a society, it will develop its own institutions and the leading actors of these institutions “will use their positions to persuade or force others to interpret and approach reality according to their institutionalised insights and convictions” (Hajer 1993: 46). Power generates discourses and these discourses constitute power (Foucault 1978).

Discourses are intelligible through narratives or story lines: “once a new discourse is formulated, it will produce story lines on specific problems, employing the conceptual machinery of the new discourse…” (Hajer 1993: 47). Narrativity is the way through which “we come to know, understand and make sense of the social world and constitute our social identities” (Newman and Paasi 1998: 195).

In our present case, the most important conclusion of the above thoughts is that the way how we think, interpret and live the geographic space around ourselves is defined through narratives (Soja 2009; Faludi 2010; Griggs and Howarth 2016) which “are combined into a more or less coherent whole” (Hajer 1993: 47). The messages transferred by the narratives and the institutions producing them have an impact on the mindset and spatial behaviour of the population by generating (new) spatial imaginaries (Othengrafen et al. 2015) including those about borders (Paasi 2005; Diener and Hagen 2012; Popescu 2012). What is more, through the narratives influencing the mindset and behaviour of the people, discourses may formulate spatial and political identities (Newman and Paasi 1998; Agnew 2008; Popescu 2012).

As “spaces are subject to being changed through social action” (Soja 2009: 32), once a new discourse arises, it can “change the minds of the inhabitants” (Othengrafen et al. 2015: 219), it can even “redesign the borders” (van Houtum and Eker 2017: 50). “Borders do not pre-exist, but they are always an outcome of social and political processes; change the process and you change the border.” (Laine and Tervonen 2017: 66).

10.2.2 New Regionalism

In elaborating upon the European MLG model, we can identify an important border-transcending component that is of particular significance within the wider political and economic logic of integration processes. Cross-border regionalism is essentially part of “new regionalism” that has emerged within the context of multi-level governance in Europe, and which is evidenced by the emergence of Euroregions, EGTCs, macro-regions, project regions and other forms of cross-border cooperation. What this understanding of regionalism provides is a way of conceptualising regional “actorness” beyond the constraints of national institutional and territorial frameworks; the ‘new’ at stake here is a notion of region based on flexible spatial relationships and interaction rather than rigid formalism (see Scott 2009). With this concept of region, the formal territorial governance matrix is enriched through policy networks that bring together local governments, state agencies, economic actors, citizens’ groups and other stakeholders—in theory, at least. New Regionalism therefore also requires us to seek a better understanding of how political action is being or can be reconstituted in socio-spatial terms.

As has been well documented, new forms of cross-border regionalism have been promoted as cooperation frameworks with the help of numerous initiatives that have been funded, among others, by several different EU Cohesion Policy instruments (see Bachtler and MacMaster 2008; Medeiros 2018). Moreover, it has been assumed that new regionalism—understood as an emerging platform for development across borders—is contributing to a Europeanisation through the development of common understandings and practices in areas such as spatial planning (Allmendinger et al. 2014; Dühr and Nadin 2007). One concrete indicator of Europeanisation has been the re-conceptualisations of territorial relationships that reflect the border-transcending nature of economic and social interdependencies within Europe (Allmendinger et al. 2014). New political alliances, increasing labour mobility, cross-border commuting as well as numerous multilateral cooperation platforms are but some examples of highly complex patterns of interstate connectivity that integration has engendered. Moreover, these interactions play out at the local, regional as well as national levels. For example, European Territorial Cooperation (ETC), the term now generally used to describe initiatives targeting cross-border development at different scales in Europe, is a formal element of EU Cohesion Policy, enshrined in the 2013 Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. The INTERREG programme, which funds ETC and is now in its sixth iteration, is an example of Europeanisation that has resulted in new cooperation routines and regional frames of reference that link member states. Moreover, INTERREG, by promoting territorial cooperation processes at cross-border and transnational levels, has been a key policy vehicle to foster territorial cohesion processes in the EU (Medeiros and Rauhut 2020).

As Debarbieux et al. (2015) document, 'project regions' based on natural landscapes such as mountain ranges have been institutionalised in Europe for the purpose of facilitating cooperation in environmental protection and other areas. In this case, institutionalisation refers to the process through which regions become socially meaningful, for example as frames for action, identity and territorial referencing, much in the sense of Anssi Paasi's (1991) geohistorical account of regional emergence. Debarbieux, Price and Balsiger (ibid) hypothesise that project regions, as flexible actor-based constructions, interact with formal administrative regions in ways that are consistent with re-scalings of territorial governance in Europe (see Sielker and Stead 2019). They thus argue that, as part of these regionalisation projects, complex multi-stakeholder networks have emerged that link 'bioregional' with formal territorial perspectives and hence involve both competition and cooperation with formal state actors. Another example of project regions, but at the macro level, are six large-scale programme regions, such as the Baltic Sea Region, Central Europe and the Danube Region, and smaller programmes that cover all cross-border areas within the EU, have been created in order to incentivise interstate and intergovernmental cooperation. Such policies are transformative in the sense that they have promoted a reframing of national concerns within a supranational context. In the most optimistic reading, a certain 'post-national' perspective appears to inform the debate regarding the future development of the EU. In this line of thought, Faludi (2010;

2014) suggests that European territorial cooperation and the designation of macro-regional cooperation areas are examples where 'soft', flexible and non-state-centric spaces are emerging as part of concrete cooperation practice.

Without question, processes of regionalisation, state re-scaling and flexible governance are influencing territorial cooperation in Europe. Moreover, the emergence of numerous regional initiatives at the macro, meso and micro-level are, to a certain degree, success stories of European integration (Medeiros et al. 2021b). Sustained material support and political benefits have ensured the continuity of these arrangements. Beyond considerations of cohesion and development, regionalisation across borders is potentially significant as a means to pre-empt potential conflict and emphasise mutual benefit through facilitating 'soft spaces' of pragmatic and politically 'neutral' territorial cooperation (see Faludi 2014). One objective of the EU's INTERREG programmes is therefore to create communities of regional interest in managing complex development challenges (see Sielker and Rauhut 2018). The regionalisation projects promoted by the EU and different national and regional actors involved in Cohesion Policy are both symbolic and instrumental; they suggest enhanced interstate dialogue based on common regional landscape identities and concrete material support for specific development initiatives and projects (Wassenberg et al. 2015). Significantly, regional cooperation has been targeted in the case of Central and Eastern Europe as a means to promote stronger interstate connections and to overcome a legacy of closed borders and restricted communication. Within this context, the Adriatic-Ionian and Danubian macro-regions serve as overarching spatial frameworks for numerous programme areas including INTERREG Central Europe.

It goes without saying, however, that regionalisation, understood as an EU context of programmatic cross-border and interstate cooperation, is not a straightforward issue. As Debarbieux, Price and Balsiger (2015) document, the creation of instrumental project regions are examples of 'scalar innovation' within Europe that interacts with formalised administrative regions. Although it has not proceeded in a uniform manner within Europe, the re-scaling of territorial governance is thus a process that has affected the political agendas of all member states.

10.2.3 Network Governance Theory

The emergence of governance theory cannot be separated from the phenomena challenging the traditional, Weberian bureaucratic and hierarchical nation-state like globalisation, democratisation, as well as the information revolution, international migration and climate change (Chhotray and Stoker 2009). These challenges made it obvious that the nation-states have lost their monopolistic role in the management of the economic processes (Virtanen 2004; Bevir 2013); as a result of the development of global information systems both the interconnectedness and the feeling of mutual interdependencies were growing which led to the internationalisation of the civil societies (Scott 2004; Levi-Faur 2014); while the most recent European crises (i.e. the migration crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion against Ukraine) clearly demonstrated that the nationally defined responses are insufficient: the confines of the nation-state and the model of government need to be exceeded. As a result, since the 1990s more and more have considered that the bureaucratically organised welfare state is overburdened and it is no longer capable of fulfilling the missions undertaken (Jessop 2011; Bevir 2013). Traditional government seemed to be inefficient or even 'hollowed out', thus it was considered by the governance theorists to be replaced by another instance (Stoker 1998; Rhodes 2007; Davoudi et al. 2008; Svensson 2014). In harmony with the then popular neoliberal economical school, the New Public Management and its key factor, the market was identified first as the appropriate solution (Bevir 2013), but it became clear very soon that many public services cannot be operated in compliance with the rules of the market on a for-profit basis. Consequently, efficiency and effectiveness which had earlier been seen as the main factors of the market-based solution have been completed with values, trust and norms (Rhodes 2007).

In parallel, networks occurred beside the governmental institutions and the for-profit players as "a response to failures of markets, failures of hierarchical coordination, and to societal and technological developments" (Provan and Kenis 2008: 233). Networks are characterised rather by horizontal relationships and high flexibility than rigid hierarchical structures, where permanent negotiations and trust have a crucial role (Torfing 2014). In this way, networks can parallelly guarantee the input (consent) and the output (satisfaction) legitimacy (Ulrich 2016). These are the factors by which networks could keep their role even "in the shadow of hierarchy" (Torfing 2014) during the last decades, when new streams of governance theory (New Public Governance, metagovernance and the decentered theory of governance) emerged. It became clear that the state had not disappeared, had not even hollowed out (Kramsch and Hooper 2004) but its monopolistic steering power had been replaced by its regulatory function (Levi-Faur 2014) where governance networks have their own specific role.

Cross-border structures like the EGTCs are of this sort of governance networks which co-exist with the nation-states within the multi-level governance system of the Union (Medeiros 2020; Ulrich 2021). The spread of EGTCs and similar bodies are not independent from the success of new regionalism promoting locally-based, bottom-up regional constructions. Similarly, as "polity has become discursive" (Atkinson et al. 2011: 116), the governance networks started proliferating in the EU.

10.2.4 Terminology

In order to explain the role that EGTCs play in European territorial cohesion, and in compliance with the above presented theoretical framework, it is necessary to define how the authors interpret *territorial cohesion* and the *EGTC* tool, as well as, for the first concept, also *territory* needs to be defined.

In this study, we use the term *'territory'* in the context of its inherent connection with sovereignty. Border scholars widely use Sack's (1986: 19) definition of territoriality: "the attempt by an individual or group to affect, influence or control people and/or phenomena, by delimiting and asserting control over a geographical area". The control becomes visible through delimitation and demarcation (Popescu 2012) and the border line marks the spatial limits of territorial sovereignty. The institutionalisation of the control is a prerequisite for the international recognition of a state, consequently "territory always implies a state or a sub-state authority deriving its powers and responsibilities from the state of which it is part" (Faludi 2018: 23).

As a result of the above-mentioned Westphalian model, sovereignty should be exercised by the nation living on the given territory (Diener and Hagen 2012; Popescu 2012; Faludi 2018). Nation-state is considered as the container of the society (Agnew 1994; Popescu 2012) which means that the state is the exclusive arbiter of power which has the right to settle its own jurisdiction and to operate law enforcement authorities in order to guarantee the respect of sovereignty. To put simply: "Nations are the institutionalisation of a territory" (Newman and Paasi 1998: 28). Only the states have territory and there is no territory outside the states. Territorialism always generates zero-sum situations: if one state gains territory, another must lose (Diener and Hagen 2012; Walsh 2015). All this means that these are the Member States which have territory, while the EU has not. It is not an incident that territorial development falls within the competence of the Member States and, according to the Treaty of Lisbon (III. 14.) territorial cohesion is a shared responsibility of the EU and its members.

In this context, it is very hard to interpret European *territorial cohesion* and it might be more accurate to speak about cross-territorial cohesion, reflecting the supranational character of the Cohesion Policy measures (Faludi 2018). The term 'territorial cohesion', which appeared for the first time, in a formal manner, in the 2nd Cohesion Report in 2001, and became 'canonised' in the Treaty of Lisbon in 2007, lacks a widely accepted definition. The different official documents of the EU are used to link it to convergence (decrease of regional disparities; ensuring equal access to services) or the geographic scope of economic and social cohesion and other aspects (like climate change, environment protection, etc.). This paper cannot analyse the attempts of defining territorial cohesion (in this perspective please refer to other chapters in this volume) from among which, for our present purposes, the concepts of *soft spaces* and *functional areas* are the most relevant ones as "EGTCs could definitely contribute more directly and tangibly to territorial cohesion at a cross-border scale" (Durand and Decoville 2020: 119).

Unlike state-bound territories (or hard spaces), soft spaces transcend jurisdictional boundaries which means that they create "new geographies", and even several soft spaces may overlap each other—especially across the administrative borders (Faludi 2010; Allmendinger et al. 2015; Othengrafen et al. 2015). Through these "in-between spaces" "new types of territories are created—cross-border territories—that question the theoretical foundations of the existing order based on absolute territorial sovereignty inside state borders " (Popescu 2012: 81; 143). These new phenomena neglect the traditional concept of territoriality so that their theorists keep avoiding to use the state-bound term of ‘territory’. In most recent years, the concept of *functional areas* appeared as means of integration and a new version of *soft spaces*, crossing the administrative boundaries which require new forms of governance (Faludi 2018; Peyrony 2020).

The *EGTC* is the most advanced model of cross-border network governance enabled by the Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006, amended by the Regulation (EU) No 1302/2013 on a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation. The novelty of this policy tool, compared with earlier cooperation structures, is that it has a legal personality in each of its members’ countries based on Community Law. From a structural point of view, this means that there is no need to set up parallel bodies on both sides of the border, which conclude a cooperation agreement under the effect of international law: public institutions (local, regional municipalities, their associations, governmental institutions and public-purpose undertakings) may establish a joint organisation which is able to act independently. From a legal point of view, the EGTC is authorised to hire employees, establish and operate institutions and set up and run public service enterprises in each country represented by its members within the confines of its members’ competences.

By the time of this publication, 84 groupings have been registered in the EU. From a functional point of view, a large majority of them (61; 73%) can be classified as second-generation Euroregions which have a general spatial development objective to implement in a specific border area (Svensson 2014; Telle 2017; Ulrich 2021). Besides, there are network-type EGTCs (16; 19%) where the thematic proximity unites the members potentially located far from each other, programming EGTCs (3; 3,5%) designed to manage European programmes and regional specific purpose EGTCs (4; 4,7%) which are similar to the first group in that they focus on a specific geographic area but their objective is not general: they focus on a concrete topic or task, e.g. the development of a railway or the management of a cross-border hospital (see Fig. 10.1).

In line with the applied conceptual framework, this chapter focuses on the second-generation Euroregions which can contribute to cross-border cohesion by representing a new discourse on space.

10.3 The EGTC—and a New Discourse on Space

After presenting the theoretical framework, this section is dedicated to the principles and models of multi-level governance (MLG) in the EU with a special focus on its cross-national aspects. The MLG concept emerged at the beginning of the 1990s, during the Delors era, in connection with the strategic debates concerning the future of geographically enlarging and institutionally deepening European integration. It was Gary Marks (1993) who thematised first the relevance of subnational levels in European polity when, in line with new regionalism, he criticised the regionally blind neo-functionalist and neo-governmentalist approaches. Ten years later, Hooghe and Marks (2003) laid down the basic principles for the model distinguishing between two

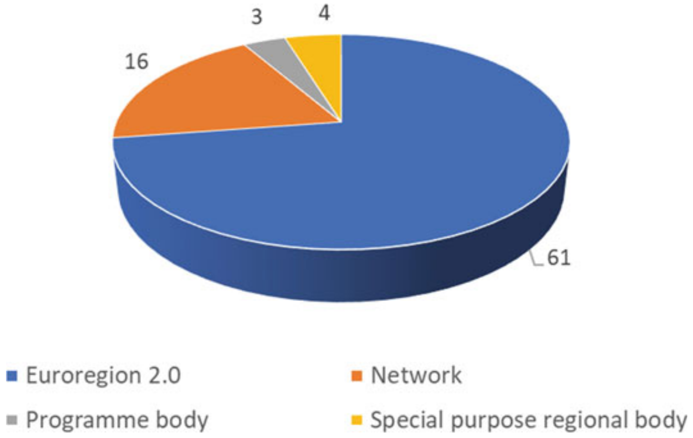

Fig. 10.1 Classification of the EGTCs established until 2022. *Source* Own compilation based on the EGTC register of the Committee of the Regions

types of MLG: the so-called federalist one where the territorial levels and jurisdictions cannot overlap each other; and the network-type one where they can. This was the period when New Public Management theorists forecasted the hollowing-out of the state and promoted the division of its competences both vertically and horizontally (CoR 2009). It means that on the one hand, according to the subsidiarity principle, "political processes […] are shaped in an interplay among supranational, national and sub-national tiers of government" (Virtanen 2004: 123); and, on the other hand, network governance structures can also be constructed horizontally, crosscutting territorial jurisdictions (Davoudi et al. 2008; Ulrich 2021).

The EU is a genuine model of the above concept. On the one hand, not only the sovereignty is shared between the EU institutions and the Member States, but also the European space is divided by different institutional jurisdictions, like the Eurozone, the Schengen Area and the European Economic Area which partly overlap. On the other hand, through Cohesion Policy, the EU favours the prioritisation of subnational regional institutions which can also ensure democratic legitimacy for the decisions concerning territorial policies. Finally, functional areas are also promoted which rarely respect administrative boundaries.

This chapter makes the statement that, through this complex governance model, the EU creates a new discourse on geographic space which clearly mitigates the thematising power of nation-states, and it also weakens the role of administrative borders. This new discourse is materialised in legal texts which are equally to be adapted to the Member States; the infrastructural elements of pan-European networks; the formulation of a quasi-foreign affairs policy of the EU through its neighbourhood policy and international aids (see above the concept of Europeanisation); the creation of a comprehensive set of symbols; and last but not least its multi-scalar institutional system including its subregional, supranational (see: macro-regions) and cross-national or transnational components. EGTC forms part of this new discourse which is built around the concept of integration and cohesion and represents the EU's "aspirational territoriality" (Evrard 2020), i.e. an intended new form of spatial arrangement.

Regardless of the fact that the first cross-border structure, the so-called EUREGIO was established one year after the Treaty of Rome, in 1958, the institutionalisation of cross-border living areas (Coatleven et al. 2020) has undergone a slow evolving process (Durand 2014; Lange and Pires 2018). The original, spontaneous informal relations have gradually been replaced by more formal, more functional forms in parallel with the intensification of cross-border movement and encounters. This evolution resulted in the need for institutional stability guaranteed by legal solutions (Evrard 2020). These solutions were first provided by the Council of Europe, especially the Madrid Outline Convention and its protocols. As Evrard and Engl (2018: 211) document, while "the European Community followed rather a market-driven approach and perceived borders as barriers to a common European economic area that should be reduced, the Council of Europe helped to legitimise and publicise sub-state cross-border cooperation efforts". This cautious approach was in harmony with the limited leeway of the EU towards ruling the management of borders of the Member States (Evrard 2020). At the same time, in order to ensure the operability of the Single Market, the free movement of goods, persons, capital and services and the legislation, the policies and the funds promoting them have played a more and more important role.

In 2007, when the concept of territorial cohesion was incorporated in the primary EU law (the Treaty of Lisbon), European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) became the third (and in 2014, the second) objective of the Cohesion Policy; as well as, the EGTC Regulation took effect, thus creating the first, Community Law-based tool of cross-border institutionalisation. Crucially, EGTC is considered as the most advanced cross-border institution of the second-type MLG of Hooghe and Marks and, partly, a tool for governance of cross-border functional areas (Medeiros 2020; Peyrony 2020).

When analysing the EGTCs' role in fostering territorial cohesion processes, several difficulties arise. First of all, as it was seen earlier, the functions of the groupings differ (euroregions, networks, programme management bodies, special purpose entities) and this fact defines their relevance in fostering cohesion. The lowest common denominator of these forms is their embeddedness in ETC, but the effects of their cooperation are very diverse. Second, the EGTCs established so far are concentrated in well-defined geographic areas, like France, Spain, Hungary and Slovakia. At the same time, the tool is not popular among the Nordic and Baltic countries, while several states outside the EU (e.g. Albania, Switzerland and Ukraine) are involved in such groupings which further complicates the assessment of their cohesion-constructing effects (see Fig. 10.2).

What is more, around France many innovative governance solutions have been developed during the last decades to promote cohesion while in the high popularity of the EGTC tool in the eastern countries can rather be explained with their resource and capacity needs and the lack of similar innovative governance solutions (Engl 2016). Thirdly, there are remarkable differences in the work intensity and

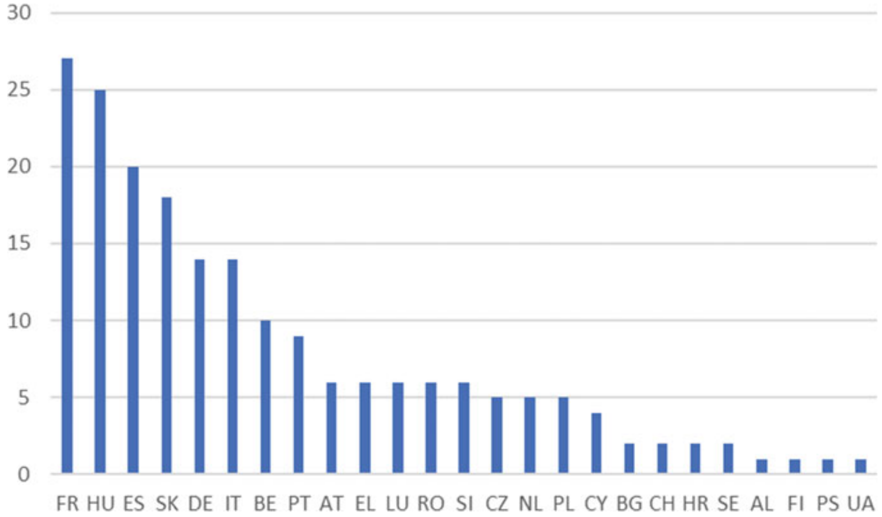

Fig. 10.2 Member countries of the EGTCs established until 2022. *Source* Own compilation based on the EGTC register of the Committee of the Regions

performance of the groupings—not to mention that 5 of them are already dissolved (Medeiros 2020). Some are very active in the development and management of their own projects; others provide such services for external actors as well, playing the role of a regional development agency; further ones provide cross-border public services; but there are several ones whose operation cannot be substantiated even via their home page. Furthermore, the operational conditions of the groupings are different per each border, depending on the geographic-administrative systems of the adjacent countries (unitarian-federal; centralised-decentralised; the level of autonomy of the local actors, etc.), the relevant legislative background, financial capacities, the rules of taxation, employment, culture, language, etc. (Evrard 2020). Consequently, the level of their contribution to European economic, social and territorial cohesion is hard to estimate and benchmark.

At the same time, the EGTCs have undisputed advantages compared to other solutions designed to facilitate cross-border cohesion, namely, their institutional sustainability, which ensures a higher degree of stability (Svensson 2014; Scott 2020) and reliability (Zumbusch and Scherer 2015); and their legal personality which ensures "visibility and centrality" and external recognition (Evrard 2020: 247; 250). Thanks to these characteristics, EGTCs can effectively contribute to the EUropeanisation of cross-national spaces (see: Scott 2020). Through the creation of the multi-jurisdictional EGTC as an independent legal entity (Allmendinger et al. 2015), the EU enforced its "shared or post-sovereignty" governance concept which represents a new discourse on European space (Peyrony 2020: 236). "In this process, new types of territories are created—cross-border territories—that question the theoretical foundations of the existing order based on absolute territorial sovereignty inside state borders.” (Popescu 2012: 143) By their cross-jurisdictional character EGTCs “reconfigure existing socio-spatial imaginaries; to facilitate a shift away from the zero-sum territorialism” (Walsh 2015: 209).

Decoville and Durand (2017) identify four components of cross-border integration, namely the functional, the institutional, the structural and the ideational aspects. It means that not only do the intensity of cross-border flows, the evolution of cross-border governance and the level of cross-border socio-economic convergence but also “individual border narratives and experiences” (Decoville and Durand 2017: 68) have their role in shaping cross-border integration.

From a discourse theory perspective, in the long term, as a sustainable, cross-territorial institution, an EGTC can influence the ways of perception and experience of state borders and borderlands. Everyday practices of cross-border labour, educational and residential mobility, provision of cross-border services, etc. generate a new perception on geographical space by their own—even without institutionalised cooperation. Especially those moving to the other side of the border but keeping their bounds with their home country represent a new model of spatial perception and behaviour where the administrative barriers lose their exclusiveness. In parallel, the encounters of border citizens create the feeling of a shared cross-border living area (Decoville and Durand 2018) which is a precondition for joint ownership of that area and the evolution of a common spatial identity. The role of the EGTC in these terms consists of providing a fixed governance structure which makes a cross-border soft space easily identifiable, visible and quasi-politically represented—‘hard’ in a sense. It is enabled to generate new narratives in a sustainable way by which it can de-construct the traditional nationally-based discourse of space and spatial identity.

10.4 The EGTC as a Driver of Territorial Cohesion

According to the EGTC Regulation, the mission of the instrument is “to facilitate and promote, in particular, territorial cooperation […] between its members […] with the aim of strengthening Union economic, social and territorial cohesion” (Art. 1 Par. a)). As a tool for strengthening the cohesion within the EU, an EGTC may fulfil two tasks. According to Medeiros (2014: 105; 2020) cross-border cooperation initiatives should mitigate the barrier effects of the borders and valorise the territorial capital of the borderland. This analysis names these two tasks as *‘approximation’* and *‘agency’*.

Borders always set distance in geographic space hindering the free flow of factors and distorting the spatial perception of the citizens: a town on the other side of the border is seen to be farther than a town in the same distance within the country (van Houtum 1998, 2000; Popescu 2012).

As a consequence of its stability, sustainability and visibility, the EGTC has a unique potential to integrate borderlands (Engl 2016). As Durand and Decoville

(2020: 109) highlight it, cooperation does not necessarily generate stronger integration, and vice versa, cross-border integration can be developed without institutionalisation. However, integration "can be promoted by tools, and this is what the European Union has achieved by creating EGTCs, since it is trying with this tool of institutional formalisation to give means to its broader objective of social and territorial cohesion across borders". Approximation refers to the capacity of the EGTC tool to reduce barrier effects by intensifying and making regular and permanent the encounters between the citizens of the two neighbouring regions (Medeiros 2020), i.e. by enhancing the feeling of mutual interdependencies and solidarity (Böhme et al. 2021). Furthermore, thanks to its institutionalised format, an EGTC can develop a new discourse on the border and the borderland by which it can reconfigure the spatial perception and behaviour of the border citizens. In the process of 'ap-proximity' (i.e. overcoming the distance generated by the border), the EGTC becomes the agent of the borderland.

This 'agency' has a multi-fold character. First, the groupings are enabled to implement projects and investments and provide services on both sides of the border; and to maintain the results of these developments through their own institutions or public benefit undertakings. In most cases, border areas are located far away from the economic centres and their peripheral situation needs to be tackled by a dedicated organisation (Evrard 2020). In order to valorise the territorial capital of these regions, the EGTC can trigger integrated cross-border development programmes and coordinate the efforts of different stakeholders with a view to mitigating social and territorial inequalities (Ulrich 2021). In this process, the EGTC can become the agent of (re-) invented functional areas, transcending the administrative borders, therefore missing the adequate domestic governance means to respond to cross-territorial place-based challenges (Böhme et al. 2011).

Second, when compensating the shortages stemming from their peripheral situation, the groupings contribute to the development of a spatially more just pattern of conditions (Evrard 2020). As the agent of spatial justice—or, as it is named by Böhme et al. (2021), 'interpersonal cohesion'—the EGTC not only contributes to convergence and a more balanced territorial development but also challenges the nation-state paradigm: it represents an alternative way of governing spaces reaching beyond the national confines and achieving that with successful compensating procedures. In this way, the groupings fulfil their mission in generating a new discourse resulting in new spatial imaginaries, new geographies and new spatial identities.

10.5 Discussion—Back to a Bordered World?

This chapter discussed the role of the EGTCs in the reinforcement of European territorial cohesion. Considering that the clear and widely accepted definition of territorial cohesion is still missing (Böhme et al. 2011; Abrahams 2014), the authors applied their own concept which is based on the discursive nature of bordering and debordering processes. These processes determine how everyday people experience space around themselves. Unlike the nation-state paradigm characterised with exclusive borderlines, the European project is built upon the gradual elimination of administrative borders in order to guarantee the free flow of factors and peaceful co-existence of nations. In this framework, as Medeiros puts it, cohesion means the mitigation of the barrier effects of the borders by which mutual interdependencies become salient (*approximation*); as well as the construction of instances and procedures by which the territorial capital of the borderlands can be valorised (*agency*). The EGTCs bearing the legal, human and financial capacities may fulfil both functions and promote European integration and cohesion, i.e. the Europeanisation of geographic space.

When concluding the study, we should not overlook the negative effects that the most recent crises, namely the migration crisis, the terrorist attacks, the Brexit, the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion against the sovereign Ukraine had on the concept of borderless Europe and, especially, on cross-border flows and cooperation. The permanently maintained border controls in some EU member states, the expansion of the EU's external borders via Brexit and its impacts upon the everyday life of the island of Ireland, the sudden border closures in March 2020, and the re-thematisation of territorial sovereignty after Russia attacked Ukraine, remarkably shook mutual trust and questioned the self-evidence of open borders within the EU. Especially during the pandemic several millions of European citizens have been deprived from their right to cross the internal borders without restrictions which obviously hampered the implementation of cross-border projects, the maintenance of cross-border services and the operation of cross-border governance structures. Re-nationalising (re-bordering) tendencies challenged the achievements of European integration and cohesion and re-established the national(istic) discourse on space (Evrard 2020). All these phenomena could be seen as detrimental to the spirit of cooperation and governance.

However, a series of testimonies justifies that cross-border structures and initiatives made significant efforts in order to mitigate the "covidfencing effects" (Medeiros et al. 2021a) caused by the national reactions. Many of them (e.g. the PAMINA, the Gate to Europe, the Meuse-Rhine or the NAEN EGTCs) gathered and systematically shared information on the actual measures; the European Region Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino and the Senza Confini EGTCs established task forces convened regularly to discuss how to adapt to government decisions and how to loosen border control; the BTC and Tisza EGTCs provided medical equipment to their Romanian, Serbian and Ukrainian partners and the hospitals operated there; while the Greater Region took part in cross-border transport of French patients to German hospitals when the French hospitals ran out of capacities (Coatleven et al. 2020; Peyrony et al. 2021; Weber 2022). These examples show that several groupings took their role of agency seriously during the crisis. But, taking into account the short history of the tool, today it is still hard to estimate how these instances will be able to re-structure the nationally-based territorial discourse in a cross-border context.

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Conclusion

Eduardo Medeiros

Public policies address public problems. Hence, they should encompass the needs of the community and, ultimately, the achievement of key societal development goals. So why should public policies contribute towards territorial cohesion trends? Mostly, because the limited and neoliberal mainstream 'growth' rationale of regional, national, EU and global development strategies and policies does not necessarily benefit all citizens and territories. So why not just present a case for policy strategies supported by a 'territorial development' rather than a 'territorial cohesion' policy rationale? At first glance, the promotion of territorial (economic, social, environmental, planning and governance) development strategies embraces the needs of societies and economic activities. However, they do not necessarily cover the needs of all territories in equal measure. Conversely, existing studies, which have measured territorial cohesion trends in a given territory in past decades, have concluded that socio-economically lagging regions are not catching up with the more developed ones in all the analysed territorial cohesion pillars (socio-economic cohesion, environmental sustainability, territorial governance/cooperation and urban polycentrism).

But why is it that important to achieve territorial cohesion? Why not just let some lagging regions fail in their development goals and put the bulk of the public investment in dynamic urban agglomerations, usually associated with national capitals? The argument in this book is that a more balanced development of the territories ends up being beneficial not only to lagging regions but also to the most dynamic ones from a socio-economic perspective, because territorial cohesion favours: (i) the creation of new markets; (ii) the reduction of congestion and pollution in metropolitan areas; (iii) a more efficient exploration of the territorial capital of lagging regions, etc. The ultimate question is: how can public policies promote territorial cohesion trends in an effective manner? This is the 'million-dollar question' of regional development theories. Some theories, like that of 'territorial cohesion cities', have been advanced

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to provide a concrete solution to this global policy challenge. But it is not easy to implement, as the Portuguese ministry of territorial development can testify. The main reason is that all small places want their share of public investment and are not likely to accept being left off the priority list of public investments favouring a specific urban location in a lagging region. Strong political action is therefore needed to implement effective territorial cohesion policies at all territorial levels.

The implementation of EU and national policies towards territorial cohesion is discussed in the first section of the book. The extent of the immense challenges involved in their implementation is revealed, as are the challenges associated with the achievement of territorial cohesion policy goals. In particular, a concrete contribution was found of EU Cohesion Policies fostering the development of the EU territory in key territorial cohesion processes, including socio-economic development, environmental sustainability, territorial cooperation and governance. Expectedly, EU Cohesion Policies have positively affected the territorial development process in all regions of EU Member States. However, they did not contribute to inverting territorial exclusion trends in all analysed European countries. Moreover, as the presented case of national policies towards territorial cohesion showed, the analysed policy instrument (European Recovery and Resilience Facility) did not directly aim at the promotion of territorial cohesion processes in all analysed countries, even though it indirectly contributed to fostering several of the territorial cohesion dimensions, mostly related to economic competitiveness and social cohesion.

Indeed, past experiences have shown that, in times of economic crisis, the bulk of public investment is poured into socio-economic development policy goals. The second section of this book explores two crucial aspects of public policies related to socio-economic development in fostering territorial cohesion processes. Firstly, the need to improve education capacities of the young in rural territories and the need to reinforce cross-border cooperation processes in cross-border areas in Europe which are often socio-economically lagging, via the active role of non-profit organisations. To some extent, these cases illustrate the complexity involved in directing public investment to promote a more balanced and harmonious socio-economic development in a given territory. This is particularly challenging in broadly depopulated rural areas which cannot easily attract young, qualified persons. If driven and moulded by an economic growth rationale, public policies tend to favour already dynamic socio-economic and demographic locations, meaning that aging and depopulation trends will continue to prevail in European rural areas. Some would present the case that these are inevitable trends and that a selection of a few development poles in these depopulated areas are to be selected to act as engines of regional development. The author of this conclusion is included in this group of researchers.

As a crucial element of territorial development and cohesion processes, environmental sustainability is addressed in the third section of this book. Two main aspects of sustainability towards a more cohesive territorial development are discussed. Firstly, the contribution of overall EU green strategies and policies and secondly the role of environmentally sustainable policies at the urban level. The former presents a growing trend in the EU's recognition of the need to finance green policies via the use of EU funding. This is particularly important in the implementation of EU Cohesion Policy, recognising that environmental sustainability is a critical dimension of territorial cohesion policies. However, as previously stated, in times of financial and economic crisis, EU and national authorities tend to divert most public funding to socio-economic development processes, thus negatively affecting the effectiveness of green investments. These, in our view, are especially relevant in urban areas, to effectively promote the transition to environmentally sustainable development, since these are the territories where most Europeans live, and those that contribute most to a global environmental degradation trend, putting the survival of our and other species at risk.

The following section analyses an often neglected, yet crucial, component of territorial development: spatial planning. Indeed, it goes without saying that a planned and compact city, for instance, increases the level of energy efficiency in the use of public transportation, as well as the access to drinking water. Hence, urban and regional planning have to be appropriately embraced in the implementation of public policies to increment territorial development and cohesion trends. In this regard, due to a lack of political competences in spatial planning, EU policies have limited direct action to pro-actively direct Member States to divert part of EU funding to spatial planning processes. As such, it is up to local, regional, national, and transnational authorities to appreciate this idea of placing spatial planning processes at all territorial levels, at the heart of territorial development and cohesion policies.

Just like spatial planning, the important roles of territorial governance and cooperation are often neglected when it comes to their potential contribution towards more cohesive territories. Territorial cooperation, for instance, can foment more balanced and cohesive territories via a direct and indirect contribution to territorial integration (reduction of cross-border barriers), cross-border planning, and territorial governance/networking (forging cross-border institutional entities). The latter aspect is explored in depth in the analysis of the relatively new (2007) cross-border legal figure of European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTCs), as a concrete solution to increase the EU process of cross-border cooperation and European integration, and consequently lead to a more cohesive EU territory.

As seen in this conclusion, some fundamental elements of public policies towards territorial cohesion were analysed. Many more could have been explored in a more detailed manner. With this book, however, the authors hope to have brought more clarity to the debate of public policies aiming at achieving territorial cohesion. On top of this, this book opens up further research avenues to new book projects exploring similar analysis, with perhaps different understandings of the concept of territorial cohesion. This is especially true in a context of a widespread conceptual vagueness and misunderstanding which the concept of territorial cohesion has faced since it was first invoked in EU reports. Indeed, another main goal of this book is to present a kind of policy guideline to all interested stakeholders on the main policy domains that need to be addressed to effectively use public funding towards promoting more cohesive territories. Crucially, territorial cohesion processes need to be better understood by policymakers to effectively design territorial development strategies in all territorial levels. Here, mainstream policy goals such as economic competitiveness, social cohesion and environmental sustainability need to be complemented with investments addressing spatial planning and territorial governance/cooperation processes, to effectively attain territorial cohesion trends.

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