

# Chapter 8

## Spatial Planning for Territorial Cohesion



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**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.<sup>1</sup>
- (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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<sup>1</sup> <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.<sup>2</sup>

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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<sup>2</sup> 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*.<sup>3</sup>

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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<sup>3</sup> *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).<sup>4</sup>  
The set of European policies with territorial impact must aim at this objective;

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<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup>

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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<sup>5</sup> 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).<sup>6</sup>*

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 Inter-governmental 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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<sup>6</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal/finance-and-green-deal/just-transition-mechanism\\_en](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<sup>7</sup> 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).<sup>8</sup> 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

<sup>7</sup> 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](http://www.eu2005.lu/en/actualites/documents_travail/2005/05/20regio/Min_DOC_2_MinConcl_fin.pdf) (accessed 02.12.2022).

<sup>8</sup> <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.<sup>9</sup> 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.<sup>10</sup> Following the meetings of the

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<sup>9</sup> 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).

<sup>10</sup> 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.

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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 14<sup>th</sup> 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.



**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).<sup>11</sup>

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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<sup>11</sup> 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).<sup>12</sup> 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

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<sup>12</sup> 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.

risk of involution, once again, towards a Regional Economic Development approach to planning to the detriment of Spatial Planning with territorial approach.

## **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.

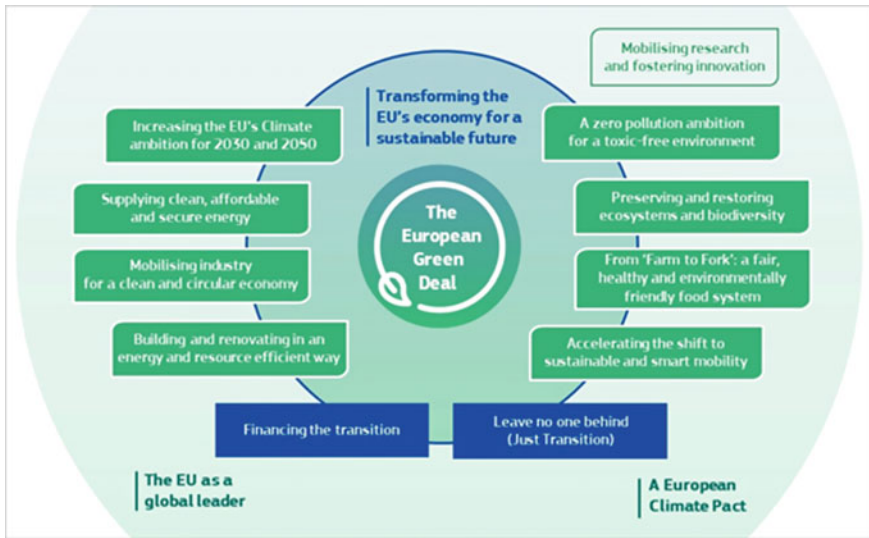
The big question is to what extent planning instruments and their practice really make it possible to achieve the objective of combining sustainable development with economic growth, respecting the principle of Territorial Cohesion. In this sense, territorial governance is the *'sine qua non'* condition 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.<sup>13</sup> Already in the current programming

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<sup>13</sup> 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



**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 Program and Multiannual Financial Framework 2021–2027).<sup>14</sup>

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 Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive, Initiatives in European urban development...

How to combine national and subnational levels with EU level, through 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

<sup>14</sup> See [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/recovery-plan-europe\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/recovery-plan-europe_en) (accessed 02.12.22).

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.

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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