SPATIAL PLANNING TOWARDS TERRITORIAL COHESION
Summary

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1. Introduction
The challenges and high expectations confronting spatial planners as a result of recent European developments led ECTP to consider their implications for planning practice, taking on this responsibility as the representative of spatial planning and spatial planners in Europe.   The resulting paper "*Strategic Planning towards Territorial Cohesion*" was discussed in ECTP Council meetings and in the London congress of 8 February 2008[1]   The main messages of that paper are summarized below.

2. Integrative planning
The demand for integrative approaches to planning territorial development in Europe has been growing for many years. The new policy notion of *Territorial Cohesion* amplifies that need.

The European Spatial Development Perspective established by the Ministers responsible for spatial development in 1999 in Potsdam argued strongly for integrative spatial planning in order to meet its sets of spatial development objectives. At the same time, within the European Commission, DG REGIO and DG Environment concluded that both regional (economic) development and protection of environmental values would be more effective with sustainable development and comprehensive planning approaches. The Commissions' programmes INTERREG and URBACT substantiated this growing demand for integrative planning for sustainable development in guidance for numerous co-financed urban and regional projects.

Within general European cohesion policy, existing social and economic cohesion policies have now been supplemented with the notion of territorial cohesion. This completes cohesion policy: now alongside social and economic aspects, the relation to physical aspects must be taken into consideration for achieving sustainable development.

This started at the 2004 informal meeting of Ministers in Rotterdam. When considering the need for Territorial Cohesion, they specified *"… the contribution of integrated spatial development approaches towards enabling regions and cities to exploit their potentials more effectively."* This relation to the Lisbon/Gothenburg objective was then enhanced during Luxembourg Presidency: *"focusing regional and territorial development policies on better exploiting regional potentials and territorial capital; better positioning of regions, and promoting the coherence of EU policies with territorial impacts."*

These considerations were finalized in Leipzig under German EU Presidency in the so-called *Territorial Agenda*, further elaborated into implementation of actions by the Portuguese and Slovene Presidencies.

One of the conclusions of the Brdo meetings of national Directors-General for spatial development during the Slovene presidency was that spatial planning is *the* essential discipline for cohesion policy.

During the current French Presidency, further steps are envisaged, although the final draft of the official statement of the Ministers now includes a new policy notion: "national" cohesion, which seems at first sight not much in line with "European" cohesion. But in any case, if that notion is adopted,

territorial cohesion and spatial planning both have regard to national, regional, local and sub-local levels.

Between the Ministerial meetings in Rotterdam and Luxembourg, an important meeting took place during the British Presidency: this one was in Bristol, and focused on sustainable urban development. The Bristol Accord was elaborated by the German Presidency and adopted at the informal Ministerial meeting conference, leading to the Leipzig Charter for sustainable urban development.

The distinction made between territorial/spatial planning and urban planning created a need for coordination. This need was expressed by the European Parliament.

The definition of spatial planning accepted among professional planners (in the *New Charter of Athens 2003*)[2] where spatial planning is planning <u>through the spatial scales</u>, with urban planning as spatial planning at urban level and regional planning is spatial planning on a regional scale - and where territorial planning is synonymous with spatial planning - seems to have been disregarded during German Presidency of the EU. Although this is understandable from the point of view of bureaucratic organisation, it should not lead to segregation of two parts of spatial planning.

3. Obstacles to good planning

Sector segregation conflicts with integrative approaches
The organisation of public bodies along lines of sectors is the common organisation model for bureaucratic organisations. Attention, activities and responsibilities are separated according to different disciplines. Lower-level public bodies seeking approval for their projects by higher authorities are regularly confronted with conflicting responses and decisions from different departments. In a spatial planning project aiming to prepare developments in an integrative way, the planners often have to coordinate higher-level reactions. Non-involvement of other sectors – or of representatives of higher levels - results in extra time and discussion.

The forced distinction between territorial/spatial planning and urban planning, even organised in different Ministries in some countries, now creates an additional need for coordination.

Administrative boundaries seldom fit
National, regional and local administrative boundaries result from history and from considerations that have been relevant in the past. Many of those boundaries are no longer relevant in the light of current developments in the field of economic development in a globalizing world, environmental aspects of climate change and demographic processes.

Territorial cohesion should be the aim in territories that are not defined by administrative boundaries but by overlapping opportunities, relations and networks. Then new potential qualities can be capitalized upon. New regions will be defined, not based on administrative borders, but capitalizing on opportunities created by their distinct, existing and potential qualities.

Stakeholders' capacity hardly used
The experts in organisations of public as well as private stakeholders can provide extremely relevant knowledge and experiences for spatial development on the different scales. Nevertheless in many projects preparing spatial policies, development visions or plans their capability is hardly used in the early stages. Genuine integrative planning approaches demand for open processes in which the relevant interests are represented.

Effective participation requires skills
The interests of people living in a territory should be borne in mind when addressing long-term future developments. Their quality of life may not easily be sacrificed for longer-term goals. Planners should be able to find a balance between the population's direct interests and the structural improvements which are the aim of strategic planning.   An open planning process in which participation provides a positive contribution towards the strategic development of a territory requires not only an open, flexible attitude by the planners but also specific skills in communication, organising and acting in meetings. These skills are not always present in current planning practice.

Commonly agreed vision on future missing
Effective spatial development planning is only possible if the proposals for planning interventions are supported widely in the territory's society. Working together towards an agreement about a common vision for the spatial development of the nation, the region or the locality is one of the most challenging activities for modern spatial planners. Such a visioning process should precede any plan preparation of strategic development importance. Time spent on getting to a common vision is worthwhile and pays back in later stages. On top of that, the shared responsibility that may result from intensive cooperation enhances the social cohesion in the territory.

Lack of training in social and economic aspects.
Most university departments of spatial planning in Europe developed out of schools of (urban) design/ architecture or from schools for geographic research on spatial developments. Both aspects are essential for sound spatial planning. Both types of schools have their specific qualities: one is more oriented towards creating an attractive spatial quality, the other towards establishing probable facts, feasibility and effects. Yet the importance of economic activities for the population's prosperity, the culture and specificities of the population as well as the relations between geographic factors and opportunities for economic development and innovation, still seems not to be sufficiently acknowledged. The planning of developments in a territory should be based on an agreed vision of the specific opportunities for future economic activities in the territory as well as on the specific social characteristics of the population.

Since sustainable development includes social, economic as well as physical aspects, impact assessments should also cover social, economic and physical aspects. Such an integrative approach of the impacts of a planning intervention might be called territorial or spatial impact assessment assessments.

4. Experiences in planning practice

In planning practice, the above obstacles are felt in the day-to-day activities of planners. Where the responsible politicians share the concerns, informal ways are developed to meet the aims of integrative planning as well as possible. The following boxes present summaries of four successful planning projects, giving positive, instructive examples.

The region of Twente
Twente, located at the eastern edge of the Netherlands province of Overijssel (at the German border), sought more sustainable development: it suffered from high levels of car-usage and suburbanisation which were an obstacle to better public transport. The spatial planning consultant advising several municipalities in the region was asked to propose solutions. The process started in 1992. National and Provincial planning agencies were invited to take an active part and DG Environment of the European Commission supported the envisaged comprehensive process financially.

Working with representatives of five municipal agencies (including the neighbouring German town), national railways, the Chamber of Commerce, housing associations and the water management board, maps for possible long-term developments (to 2030) were prepared in which future housing will concentrate around 6 potential new railway stations, mixed with offices and services. In order to create a counterweight against further suburbanization, urban concentration was enhanced by simultaneously developing a structural plan for the surrounding landscape, based on agricultural activities and protected natural areas with historic country seats, structured along the creeks in the region. Climate change required increased water buffer capacity and slowing down the flow of streams. The future development vision for Twente became the basis for spatial plans of the four Dutch cities concerned, and received a prize in the European Urban and Regional Planning Awards in 1994 for its integrative, sustainable approach. In 2001 the same planning consultant was invited again to lead the process involving stakeholders to review the vision after 8 years of implementation. Three of the six potential railway stations had been built by then. Mapped scenarios were helpful for the decision-making about up-dating the vision. These activities also resulted in the creation of the regional body for further cooperation.

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The combination of a long-term vision agreed with stakeholders on basis of SWOT analyses and continuity of partners and consultant were important for a successful process in Twente.

In the Spanish Basque region, similar experiences offer good examples.

The Basque Country as a City Region
The Spanish constitution of 1978 transferred powers related to urban and territorial issues to the newly-created Autonomous Regions. The Basque country defined a territorial strategy to organise the transformation of its territory and to develop it as a real city-region (Euskal Hiria). The Basque population has a great sense of identity and the new territorial strategy helped to overcome a crisis that was historically linked to the industrial revolution.

A thinking process was set off in Basque Country to identify the best territorial model which would help to reinforce the identity marks and its political autonomy. The Basque Government supported this process; an international competition was organised to select the group of planners to develop the technical tools and organise the participation processes. Studio Taller de Ideas worked as a lead partner and collaborated with ten different teams responsible for the different aspects of the project.

The basic contents of this strategy can be synthesised in the following points:

- *A territorial model easy to understand and visualise in its proposals and objectives. (The concept of City-Region)*
- *Polycentrism as a key point for the articulation and dynamic evolution of the urban system, especially Bilbao, San Sebastian, Vitoria and their future urban profiles*
- *The proposal for specific initiatives for medium-sized cities and for rural communities*
- *Protection of the environment and landscapes in a context of major environmental impact of industrial activities*
- *Participatory process, consensus on an intelligent regional vision based on its own component of excellence*
- *Flexibility*
- *Political commitment and institutional consensus*
- *At present, the strategic direction of the Basque Country consists on the transformation of the region into an Ecosystem of Innovation*

Alfonso Vegara

And in the Scottish Metropolitan region of Glasgow and the Clyde Valley, planning practice developed a process which resulted in a commonly agreed vision and has been recognised as a model for joint working and strategic planning.

Glasgow and Clyde Valley Joint Structure Plan (1996 onwards)
In 1996, the UK Government fragmented Regional Councils in Scotland into a set of smaller, separate councils. In the Glasgow metropolitan area, the eight Councils wanted to retain the capacity to take effective strategic decisions locally. They therefore set up a statutory Joint Committee with delegated powers to prepare the statutory strategic plan.

The biggest challenge to strategic planning posed by this reorganisation of local government was the loss of powers of local government. As a result, the decisions on trunk-road issues, water services, public transport priorities and affordable housing issues were increasingly dependent on government agencies. The focus of the Joint Committee was therefore on reintegrating the capacity to take strategic decisions.

The scope of the Structure Plan was therefore different from its predecessor. The following points summarise some of the key components of this paradigm shift in the approach to strategic planning in the West of Scotland:
- *__Joined-up policies:__ It was particularly important to ensure that all statutory agencies were party to the assumptions, scenarios and targets in the plan and thus had a sense of ownership of the plan itself*

- **Clear Development Priorities:** *The plan sought to be pro-active and set out a clear set of spatial development priorities in eight strategic policies. This was reinforced by the identification of three Metropolitan Flagship Initiatives for the Clyde Waterfront, Clyde Gateway and Ravenscraig as the key regeneration priorities*
- **Minimal Criteria-based Planning:** *The corollary of being more pro-active was to get away from the regulatory focus that characterises most of the earlier development plans with only strategic policies. Development control criteria-based policies which dominate most plans were consolidated into two policies*
- **Linkage to Implementation Mechanisms:** *The core policies were linked to delivery mechanisms through joint action plans prepared jointly with key economic, transport and health agencies which explicitly linked the policies and strategies of these agencies to the development priorities in the Plan.*

The effectiveness of the 2000 Plan has been reflected in a number of ways, in terms of:
- **Promoting Urban Renewal:** *The level of renewal has been sustained since 1996 with brownfield land take up being maintained at about 66 per cent, harnessing £1 billion of additional regeneration projects. Its three Flagship Initiatives are now reflected in the National Planning Framework as key priorities*
- **Harnessing additional resources:** *The Plan underpinned the ERDF SPD (Single Programming Document) and the Scottish Executive's Cities Growth Fund. More recently, the Plan is being used as the basis of a bid for a £60 million five-year rolling programme for the treatment of vacant and derelict land and a multi-agency Greenspace partnership*
- **Widening Strategic Cooperation:** *The collective action achieved through the joint strategic planning arrangements has encouraged wider collaboration in other areas across the metropolitan area for example Joint Transport and Greenspace Strategies, as a result of which equivalent dedicated teams are being set up to deliver these strategies.*

Vincent Goodstadt

Such examples show that in planning practice, in addition to the wisdom in leadership of responsible politicians, the personal qualities of the planners organising, informing and guiding the process, using the positive contributions of all participants, are of essential value.

All these examples of successful regional planning demonstrate the importance of the cities as motors of development.

The Netherlands region of Drechtsteden
The seven municipalities which make up the region of Drechtsteden, south of Rotterdam, took a decision to cooperate and invited a consultant to organise the process in 1997. No better activity could be proposed than the preparation of a spatial vision for a common future (2030). The team consisted of representatives of agencies of the municipalities, the Province and stakeholders of regional environmental, commercial and housing bodies.

The main issue to be addressed was the competing offer of sites in economic zones by each of the municipalities. Since none of them offered specialised services, the basis for competition was limited to land prices for economic (but also residential) activities. So each of the many (25) economic zones in the region tended to degrade. After a SWOT analysis and benchmarking the distinct qualities, scenarios were prepared, based on different possible dominating policy options. Many of the planning interventions which previously seemed to conflict turned out not to conflict when visually combined on maps. Specialisation based on existing cultural and other characteristics was decided among the municipalities.

The results were adopted for further plan-making by stakeholders. One of the strongest results is that all economic zones including the economic values and financial interests in the region were put into one common organisation which now offers a range of different specialized, higher-quality areas for economic activities.

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5. Lessons learned

Experiences in modern planning processes show the importance of support of the outcomes by the stakeholders. Stakeholders should be involved in such a way that they really become co-owners of the results. It must be **their** own SWOT analysis that points to **their** selection of promising opportunities. The vision must finally result from the choice of the scenario which is assessed by the participants as the best of the alternative scenarios. Only then can a commonly agreed vision on the territory's spatial development be established.

That creates an enormous challenge to the work of the professional spatial planners:
- The process must be initiated, designed and accepted,
- The relevant territory and stakeholders should be identified
- Draft SWOTs must be prepared and provided with decisive information.
- Scenarios must be prepared and mapped, facilitating open communication.

The professional planner, by keeping the overview, providing information, proposing ideas and solutions for potential problems, informing discussions with professional knowledge and relaxing discussions by considering alternatives, will have a facilitating and guiding role. In short, effective planning processes require the support of all involved, which only can result if the process is so organised that it is truly integrative, open, participative and interactive. This applies to cities as well as regions, since spatial planning regards all spatial scales within their wider context and in relation to the lower scale elaboration. For instance, restricting planning interventions to the local scale for sustainable urban planning will not be very effective, nor will preparing regional developments without taking the cities into account which are the motors of development.

6. Recommended steps

The ECTP paper "Strategic Planning towards Territorial Cohesion" presents an approach to strategic urban and regional development planning in 12 steps. These are summarized below in 7 recommendations for an integrative, open, participative, interactive process:

6.1 Define the relevant territory
Any politician and/or a planner can take the initiative for a planning process, responding to specific problems or chances. Defining the relevant territory should not be based on overly-familiar administrative borders. It is better to analyse functional relations and overlapping networks and establish importance and density of those relations in order to propose the delineation of the relevant territory.

6.2 Invite stakeholders
The establishment of the relevant territory helps identify the public and private stakeholders to be invited for participation in the activities envisaged. Participants from private parties should not only represent important interests in society, but should also be willing to spend time and take responsibility. Experts from other sectors than spatial planning are invited in order to enhance the integrative approach in the earliest stages. Stakeholders from higher public bodies (for instance responsible for approving spatial plans) are also involved in early stages so that they are well informed and can be committed to the outcomes. During the process the composition of the team should be flexible according to the needs during the process.

6.3 Agree on SWOT
Planning experts, together with (for instance) economic and ecology experts prepare information for discussions among the stakeholders about strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Experts may submit a draft SWOT analysis, but the most important point is that all participants are intensively involved in the discussions. Full agreement about SWOT aspects is needed. Important doubts about real distinctive qualities may become a barrier in later stages. Aspects of economic development and quality of life will play an essential role in considering future developments.

The SWOT analysis must focus on promising opportunities. Information provided to the SWOT analysis and specifically for the opportunities, must include comparative facts based on benchmarks so that real distinctive qualities are considered and supposed qualities can be disregarded. Geographic and cultural assets determining the territory's identity will be of distinctive value.

6.4 Promising opportunities
The SWOT analysis - and more specifically the promising opportunities - should be explicitly agreed. It is not effective if an expert's report is presented and accepted. All stakeholders should be actively involved in discussions selecting a minor number of a very few promising opportunities. Being very selective and not accepting unjustified, theoretical promising opportunities should be balanced by considering visionary aspects.

The outcomes must be agreed and communicated to the wider public.

6.5 Alternative scenarios
Integrative scenario presentations on maps of possible developments and solutions for problems should be prepared by the planners. Such scenarios should take into account the result of the SWOT analysis (opportunities) and current structural issues. They should be long-term, future-oriented and vary according to different weights given to different aspects (priority to economic development in one scenario, priority to ecological values in another) These will show that there are various possible solutions for taking sector and private interests into account.

6.6 Select the optimal scenario
As a result of presenting various scenarios for future developments discussions among stakeholders about assessing the different models will be quite open and relaxed. The maps will have a focusing and structuring effect on the discussions. The discussions aim at assessing advantages and disadvantages of the different scenarios in order to select optimal solutions. In practice, those discussions resulted in several cases in one or more new, better scenarios.   The selected scenario, the result of interactive meetings, will easily merit shared ownership by all parties involved.

6.7 Commitment and information
The results of such processes, if carried out according to real integration, openness, participation and interactivity, should lead to shared ownership and commitment by all involved parties. That is the basis for formal agreements which should be widely communicated. It is also important that every stage during the process is closed by explicitly agreeing on the results and that the results of the common efforts are well communicated to the wider public.

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[1] "The EU Wants Territorial Cohesion: Can spatial planners make it happen?" Report of the conference by Prof. Mark Tewdwr-Jones http://www.ceu-ectp.org/inc/cgi/cp/cp20050923.pdf
[2] The full text of the New Charter of Athens 2003 in English and French is available as a book from ECTP (secretariat@ceu-ectp.org) or on the ECTP website at http://www.ceu-ectp.org/e/athens/ (English) and http://www.ceu-ectp.org/f/athens/index.html (French)