ANDREAS FALUDI

Unfinished business

*European spatial planning in the 2000s*

The European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) adopted in 1999 is widely applied. INTERREG brings new actors into its orbit. The European Commission refers to it more frequently than could have been expected. However, the process relied on informal meetings of ministers and an equally informal Committee on Spatial Development doing the work. Having been kept at arm’s length by member states, the Commission has written this process off. Intergovernmental cooperation is indispensable, nevertheless. What is needed to advance European spatial planning in the 2000s is a package deal, attractive to the member states that have worked so enthusiastically on the ESDP. The deal must build on INTERREG, in particular the various spatial visions, and envelop the institutional infrastructure emerging in this context. Last but not least, the Community role needs to be legitimised. Otherwise, spatial planning will not flourish in the European multi-level system of governance.

European integration is an enigma which a wealth of scholarly work has failed to sort out. One thing is certain though—one of the chief modes of operation, removing barriers, changes spatial relations, and so do flanking strategies, like support for less favoured regions and Trans-European Networks (TENs).

Spatial planners have come to understand this spatial dimension to European integration. They have established collaborative relations, leading among others to the European Spatial Development Perspective, known as the ESDP (CEC, 1999a; Faludi and Waterhout, 2002).

Formulating strategy is an ongoing process, which is why its makers envisaged the ESDP undergoing revisions. However, the prospect of a revision is receding into the background. The reason is the issue of the Community role in European planning. Control over territory, and thus the competency to plan it, is a defining characteristic of sovereign states, so sharing planning powers with Brussels is a sensitive issue.

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If the ESDP were to join other planning documents gathering dust on the shelves, so what? Part 1 shows that in its own terms the ESDP is a success, so it would be a shame to let it go. Part 2 discusses the cracks in the institutional architecture of European spatial planning that nevertheless threaten the future of the ESDP process. Part 3 makes proposals for a package deal to break the apparent deadlock.

**The success of the ESDP**

**THE ESDP MESSAGE**

In the ESDP, member states and the Commission have committed themselves to a ‘spatial approach’. This entails coordinating various ‘spatial policies’ with a view to the Community goals of cohesion and sustainability and their territorial effects. Thus, the makers of the ESDP have agreed to:

- achieve a balanced and polycentric city system and promote global economic integration zones outside the core of Europe, identified as the ‘pentagon’ London–Paris–Milan–Munich–Hamburg, as well as to promote urban–rural partnership;
- safeguard parity of access to infrastructure and knowledge; and
- work towards sustainable development by means of prudent management and protection of nature and the cultural heritage.

In an attempt at sidestepping the competency issue, member states and the Commission have decided to do this through dialogue and without interfering with existing competencies.

**THE ACTION PROGRAMME**

Only months after the adoption of the ESDP, an action programme was agreed on. It related to:

- the promotion of a spatial dimension in policies at Community and national level;
- improvements to knowledge, research and information on territorial development; and
- preparation for an enlarged territory of the EU.

The 12 actions are in various states of completion, for instance the ‘geography manual for secondary schools’, a French initiative, is now available. (For the English version see Bailly and Fremont, 2001.) The object of another action, the European Spatial Observatory Network (ESPON), is also a reality (Bengs, 2002). Likewise, the intended pan-European framework is on the books (CEMAT, 2000). The Commission has done its homework, too, by commissioning a study on ‘Spatial Impacts of Community Policies and Costs of Non-Coordination’ (Robert et al., 2001). In addition, there are examples of the application of the ESDP in member states. These are discussed first before turning to the use made by the Commission of the ESDP.
APPLICATION IN MEMBER STATES
Evidence of the application of the ESDP in four north west European member states comes from a project done under the Community initiative INTERREG IIc looking at Germany, the UK, The Netherlands and Belgium (Faludi, 2001) augmented by other sources.

**Germany**
Germany is a federation where the Länder have considerable influence. One of the few planning responsibilities of the federal government is to represent Germany in the European arena. ¹ German federal planners have done this with enthusiasm, basing themselves on the outcome of joint deliberations of the Länder and the federal government concerning German unification, the so-called ‘Guidelines for Regional Policy’ (Federal Ministry for Regional Planning, Building and Urban Development, 1993). Coming six years later, the ESDP is more elaborate and specific. The issue arising is whether the Guidelines should be revised to take account of the ESDP. ² The alternative would be for the Länder to apply it directly, without the Guidelines being revised (Selke, 1999a, 90–92). Revision of the Guidelines evokes little enthusiasm. Germany focuses on planning cooperation with the accession states instead. The country has a share in the majority of INTERREG transnational cooperation areas, the German emphasis being on the Baltic Sea Area (Görmars, 2001) and on CADSES, shorthand for Central European, Adriatic, Danubian and South East European Space (Graute, 2002), both of which include accession states. German participation in five cooperation areas under INTERREG IIIb (Baltic, North Sea, CADSES, North West Europe and Alpine Space) will have a similar orientation, with the federal government setting clear priorities as to the types of projects that it would like to see submitted (Bundesamt für Bauwesen und Raumordnung, 2001a, 43).

**The UK**
Since the Blair government has come into power, the UK has played a constructive role in the ESDP process (Zetter, 2001) and the ESDP received a warm welcome. This is particularly true for the spatial planning approach. To UK planners it signals the liberation of planning from the shackles of the narrow ‘land use management’ approach (CEC, 1997a) pursued under the Conservatives (Cullingworth and Nadin, 2002, 81). Thus, the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) wants planners to adopt a broad, strategic approach to the ‘mediation of space’ and the ‘making of place’. The main thrust of the application of the ESDP is not in statutory land use planning. Rather, as the paper by Shaw and Sykes elsewhere in this issue explains, under Planning Policy Guidance Note 11, Regional Planning (DETR, 2000), each region must submit a strategic plan for

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¹ For the most recent overview of the German planning system in English see Turowski (2002).
approval to the Secretary of State that must reflect ESDP principles. There has never been a planning framework for the whole of the UK. However, with devolution, not only to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, but soon also to the English regions (DTLR, 2002), the RTPI for one has put the issue of whether the ESDP needs to be matched at the national level on the political agenda (Wong et al., 2000). This goes to show that the translation of the ESDP into UK practice is taken seriously. With the UK having a share in no less than three out of the seven ‘cooperation’ areas under INTERREG IIc, this Community initiative can be viewed as a success, too. Like elsewhere, it helps to create a European planning community.

The Netherlands

Dutch planners have been staunch advocates of the ESDP (National Spatial Planning Agency, 2000; Martin, 2001). It is invoked in the ‘Fifth National Policy Document on Spatial Planning 2000/2020’ currently under preparation. The report identifies six national urban networks, including the ‘Delta Metropolis’, being the new name of the well-known Randstad and one of the nodes of the European polycentric system of cities discussed in the ESDP. With an eye to improving its position, the government undertakes to improve infrastructure connections with the Flemish cities and the German Ruhr Area. To this end, and to improve coordination generally, contacts with neighbouring countries have been intensified. The policy is also to strengthen the spatial dimension of European regional policy, about which more consideration is given below. The goal is a European strategy for spatial investments. The Dutch with their share in three transnational cooperation areas, including a special one concerned with flood prevention in the Rhine and Meuse river basins, have an important stake in INTERREG IIc, too. Lead partners on several projects, including one designed to formulate a spatial vision for North West Europe, are from The Netherlands. As in other countries, Dutch planners look forward to exploiting the opportunities offered by INTERREG IIIb.

Belgium

Like Germany, Belgium is a federation. However, in contrast to Germany, all planning powers have been devolved to the regions. As far as participation in European spatial planning is concerned, this leads to complications (van der Lecq, 2001). Regions take turns in representing Belgium at ministerial meetings and on the Committee on Spatial Development (CSD). The application of the ESDP also takes place in the regions. While the Brussels Capital Region and Flanders focus on internal matters, the Walloon Region seems to take its cues from the ESDP. Thus, a planning document coming out concurrently with the ESDP has defined the region as in danger of being bypassed by emergent Euro
corridors (Governement Wallon, 1999). The Walloon Region is also lead partner on a number of INTERREG IIc projects. Other Belgian regions merely participate as partners.

**Other countries and accession states**

To start with, Denmark has tailor made its 1997 national planning document (Ministry of Environment and Energy, Spatial Planning Department, 1997; Jensen and Jørgensen, 2000) to reflect the ‘First Official Draft’ of the ESDP (CEC, 1997b). As Böhme explains elsewhere in this issue, other Scandinavian countries, too, are taking a leaf out of the ESDP. Interestingly, this also applies to non-member Norway. The Swiss Planning Policy Guidelines, too, are in harmony with the ESDP (Wegelin, 2001), and (like Norway) Switzerland is involved in its application within the framework of INTERREG. Ireland has embarked on national spatial planning, this being yet another example of the ESDP having an impact. Luxembourg too has presented draft spatial planning guidelines (Ministère de l’Aménagement du Territoire, 1999) elaborating upon ESDP themes. During the preparation of the Austrian Spatial Development Perspective (2001), there was at least an attempt to consider the implications of the ESDP (ÖROK, 1999). As regards Italy, Janin Rivolin shows elsewhere in this issue that there has been more discussion on the ESDP than outsiders appreciate. Lastly, in France, work on ESDP themes, like polycentricity, is continuing (Guigou, 2000; Peyrony, 2002). The French effortlessly combine this with the advancement of their own ideas, exploring among others the relation between polycentricity and ‘territorial cohesion’ (Faludi and Peyrony, 2001), a concept discussed below.

In 1994, the Germans invited accession states to be observers in the ESDP process. At the transnational seminars (Williams, 2000), their representatives gave papers. Slovakia, for one, has produced a spatial development strategy reflecting ESDP themes (Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic, 1999). Experts from the accession states are impatient, therefore, about not having been able to participate more fully (Finka, 2001). It is clear that the ripple effects of the ESDP reach beyond the EU.

Summarising, the ESDP has had an impact, although perhaps less so in the countries that have played a major role in promoting it than in others. Thus, while having put their stamp on the proceedings, Germany, The Netherlands and France feel no urgent need to change their ongoing practices. The UK and other countries, including some accession states, see the ESDP more as a challenge.

Be that as it may, in his classic study, Williams (1996, 91) points out that the European scale is outside the professional experience of the majority of planners. Maybe the greatest success has been in this area. Many more planners have been exposed now to issues arising from the spatial structure of Europe and to relevant conceptual models, metaphors and ways of thinking. The least one can say is that the application of the ESDP has been a learning experience.

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4 As non-members though, both have to pay their own way.
APPLICATION IN COMMUNITY POLICY

The ESDP is being invoked in Community policy, first and foremost in the Community initiative INTERREG, a success like no other transnational planning programme. Beyond this, the Commission refers to the ESDP in various policy documents. The signs are that the ‘spatial approach’—cross-sectoral coordination with a view to the spatial impacts that sector policies, separately or jointly, have on territory—is taking root in Brussels. After having discussed INTERREG, this section turns to the documents coming from the Commission.

INTERREG

In just four of the seven transnational cooperation areas, the North West Metropolitan Area (NWMA), the North Sea Area, the Baltic Sea Area and CADSES, a total of 180 projects have been launched. In just one of them, the NWMA, a grand total of 369 partners participated. It seems no exaggeration to say that overall INTERREG has drawn thousands of experts within the orbit of the ESDP. This will create a European spatial planning community (Zetter, 2002).

Four spatial visions have also been formulated, one each for the cooperation areas mentioned above. The visions take European spatial planning where the ESDP, devoid as it is of a truly spatial vision, has not dared to go. In a revision of the ESDP, these could form building blocks of an overall European spatial vision. Fortunately, now that it has finally been launched, ESPON is available to take up this challenge.

The Commission launched INTERREG IIc in the hope that its support for transnational planning cooperation would improve its standing with member states. However, the latter did not come to terms with a Commission role other than as a paymaster. Ominously, the successor programme, INTERREG IIIb, no longer has planning in its title. Commission attitudes are clearly changing.

Other policy areas

The Communication *The Common Transport Policy: Sustainable Mobility Perspectives for the Future* (CEC, 1998a) refers to the ESDP approvingly, and so do the ‘Urban Communications’ (CEC, 1997a; 1998b; Atkinson, 2001, 390). Since publication of the ESDP in 1999, there has been a deluge of further Commission documents referring to it. Thus, the ‘Guidelines for Programmes in the Period 2000–2006’ for the structural funds stipulate that the development strategy of regions applying for funding must take account of the ESDP (CEC, 1999b, 39). The Second Cohesion Report, too, refers to the ESDP as the first concerted effort to analyse territorial imbalances in the EU (CEC, 2001b, xiii, xxx). A programme under Article 10 of the regulation for the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), called TERRA, assesses the relevance of the policy options in the ESDP as a ‘...means to demonstrating the importance of a multi-sectoral and integrated approach to spatial planning’ (CEC, 2000a, 7). A Communication on Integrated Coastal Zone Management announces that the
Commission ‘...will work with the member states to support the application of the ESDP, including integrated spatial planning and management across administrative, natural and socio-economic units’ (CEC, 2000b, 12; Kidd et al. in this issue. Perhaps more importantly, the ‘European Union Strategy on Sustainable Development’ (CEC, 2001a, 13) refers to the ESDP and to ‘territorial management’ as part of European strategies of sustainable development. The Commission presented this to the Gothenburg European Council as part of the ‘Lisbon Strategy’ of turning the EU into the most competitive economy capable of sustainable economic growth in the world.

Another Communication (CEC, 2000c), Services of General Interest in Europe, likewise invokes the ESDP. Under Article 16 of the Treaty establishing the European Community such services have a place among the shared values of the Union. Article 16 also and for the first time invokes the concept of ‘territorial cohesion’. The latter gets a prominent place in the ‘Second Report on Economic and Social Cohesion’ (CEC, 2001b) discussed below. Meanwhile, the thinking on services of general interest has been summed up once again in a Commission report to the Laeken European Council in late 2001 reiterating their importance for ‘social and territorial cohesion in the European Union’ (CEC, 2001c, 3). The Communication adds that access to such services has been placed among the fundamental rights of the EU proclaimed at the European Council of Nice where it says in Article 36:

The Union recognises and respects access to services of general economic interest as provided for in national laws and practices in accordance with the Treaty establishing the European Community, in order to promote the social and territorial cohesion of the Union. (CEC, 2001c, 3)

Not the least significant indicator of the Commission taking the ESDP seriously is the White Paper on ‘European Governance’ (CEC, 2001d). It places the ESDP at the core of efforts to achieve coherence, the latter being one of the ‘principles of good governance’:

The territorial impact of EU policies in areas such as transport, energy or environment should be addressed. These policies should form part of a coherent whole as stated in the EU’s second cohesion report; there is a need to avoid a logic which is too sector specific. In the same way, decisions taken at regional and local levels should be coherent with a broader set of principles that would underpin more sustainable and balanced territorial development within the Union.

The Commission intends to use the enhanced dialogue with member states and their regions and cities to develop indicators to identify where coherence is needed. It will build upon existing works, such as the European Spatial Development Perspective. (CEC, 2001d, 13)

However, there is nothing to suggest that the Commission wishes to see the ESDP being revised. The reason is that it disagrees with the process. In its work programme for 2000, Directorate-General Regio, supportive though it has been of the ESDP, has announced the end of the intergovernmental approach to
European spatial planning (Gatawis, 2000, 71). To take the place of the CSD, a sub-committee to the ‘comitology’ committee concerned with the structural funds (the Committee of Development and Conversion of Regions [CDECR]) has been set up called Committee for Spatial and Urban Development (SUD). Its brief is to advise the Commission in matters of ‘territorial cohesion’. As with all comitology committees (other than the CSD) the Commission holds the chair and sets the agenda. In addition, the Commission supports ESPON. (As a token to member states, a ‘CSD + ’ meets once every year to discuss the ESPON work programme and enlargement.)

From the above, three factors become evident:

- The Commission embraces the ‘spatial approach’ in the ESDP as a step towards greater coherence of its policies.
- It does so under the flag of ‘territorial cohesion’, which gets a brief mention in Article 16 of the Treaty establishing the European Community.
- It wants to formulate indicators for territorial cohesion and in so doing involve the member states.

As far as the latter are concerned, they were one of the main lines of research in the Study Programme on European Spatial Planning, where geographical position, spatial integration, economic strength, natural assets, cultural assets, land use pressure and social integration were discussed (Bundesamt für Bauwesen und Raumordnung, 2001b). Two detailed studies have been published, one relating to geographical position (Wegener et al., 2001) and one to cultural assets (Anzuini and Strubelt, 2001). Work on indicators will continue under ESPON.

These are initiatives of the Directorate-General Regio. The environmental Directorate-General does something similar. Rather than territorial cohesion, it invokes, in the English language, the innocuous sounding term ‘territorial management’. To appreciate what is meant one needs to look at the French version of the relevant documents. They invoke ‘aménagement du territoire’, which, in the ESDP context, always means the equivalent of spatial planning. So, although the term as such is falling out of favour, the Commission is clearly of the opinion that it does engage in, and will continue to engage in, a form of spatial planning.

In fact, one of the working groups helping to prepare the White Paper on European Governance has already made concrete proposals to give shape to the Community role in this. It is for the Commission to prepare a periodic strategic orientation document with the aim of promoting the coordination of Community policies and their impact. The idea is to let this dovetail with the annual financial perspective proposal. The project already has a name—European Scheme of Reference for Sustainable Development and Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion (SERDEC) (Working Group 4c, 2001, 43). One would imagine that the SUD will be consulted. Whether this is enough in terms of member state involvement will be discussed below.
**Cracks in the institutional architecture**

What will be discussed next is the underlying issue over whether the Community has, or should have, a competency to engage in spatial planning. Superficially, this seems to be about whether one or the other article in the treaty allows for a Community role in planning, but the treaties are not really the problem. If only there were consensus in the matter, then ways could be found to interpret them flexibly. In fact, the treaties do not really define competencies, they set out ‘tasks’ or ‘purposes’ for European cooperation (Hooghe and Marks 2001, 26). Thus, if there were to be a consensus among member states, and subject to the Commission taking the initiative (which, on the invitation of member states, it would), it would be easy to define a Community planning role. However, consensus on the matter is absent. Thus, the competency issue is really about power, and also about how one sees spatial planning and, even more fundamentally, space and spatial relations. The tough issues about planning and about the nature of space that it raises will be discussed first.

**VIEWS OF PLANNING AND OF SPACE**

*Views of planning*

The Commission report on the TERRA project identifies two common views—‘Most frequently, statutory urban or regional spatial planning was directed toward anticipating growth, protecting natural resources and the countryside and coordinating basic infrastructure’ (CEC, 2000a, 9). This approach has become inadequate, so a new attitude has emerged. It includes

...a willingness to develop a more positive, project-oriented approach ... The plan is now understood as a ‘project of a city or region’, a democratic expression of what the territory should be and a frame of reference for collective action. Territorial entities, such as cities and regions, are acknowledged as historical manifestations with diverse features and their own evolution rather than following a predetermined linear process. The new planning tends to move beyond a ‘command and control’ regulatory statute establishing the rules of the game. It has also acquired the character of a type of ‘contract’ binding and directing the social agents of a particular spatial entity to a joint vision for their area. (CEC, 2000a, 9)

One advocate of strategic planning is France. Indeed, the account above of strategic planning reads as if coming out of a French textbook. In contrast, Germany is a representative of regulatory planning. The difference between them has shaped the competency issue, and this will be described later.

*Views of space*

Anderson (1996) discusses European integration in the light of the ‘territorial unbundling’ going on. Laffan et al. (2000, 29) conclude that ‘...the congruence between bounded territory, identity and function is being eroded’. One source of the failure to understand this process is the reification of states as fixed units of sovereign space (Anderson, 1996, 138–39). This is rooted in thinking about space as something absolute. In reality, political processes ‘...occur in
geographic space which is historically produced by human society . . . it is highly variable and very much “relative” rather than “absolute”” (Anderson, 1996, 140).

‘One-level’ thinking, Anderson (1996) continues, is inappropriate for dealing with multi-levelled and multi-faceted processes. Medieval territoriality should be the model instead. After all

... territories of medieval European states were often discontinuous, with ill defined and fluid frontier zones rather than precise or fixed borders. ... Furthermore, the different levels of overlapping sovereignty typically constituted nested hierarchies ..., and people were members of higher level collectivities not directly but only by virtue of their membership of lower level bodies. (Anderson, 1996, 141)

Forming a modern state, in comparison

... involved a territorialization of politics, with a sharpening of differences at the borders of states and of nations between ‘internal’ and ‘external’, ‘belonging’ and ‘not belonging’, ‘us’ and ‘them’. (Anderson, 1996, 141)

Singular sovereignty replaced multiple and overlapping sovereignties.

THE COMPETENCY ISSUE

When discussing any competency to plan, one needs to bear the above points in mind. This is because regulatory planning, working with statutory plans, is rooted in the idea of a singular sovereignty. Relations between levels of government and administration are seen as a zero-sum game—what competency one level receives is at the expense of the other. As against this, strategic planning allows for actors having different and even conflicting perspectives on space and is thus more suited to the emerging system of multi-level governance in Europe (Hooghe and Marks, 2001). The complementary notion of space is relative.

This section begins by discussing the French initiative for European spatial planning taken in the spirit of the view of planning as being strategic. This is followed by an account of the Germans framing the situation in terms of competency, based on their view of planning as regulatory.

A French brainchild

No lesser authority than Michel Barnier (2002, 201) lets us know that ‘aménagement du territoire’ is a mode of operation rooted in the French administrative model. Bailly (2001, 195) confirms this, pointing out that the ERDF is ‘...modelled on the DATAR (Délégation à l’aménagement du territoire et à l’action régionale [author’s insertion]) ... which aims to limit the regional inequalities in the Union with particular concern for social and spatial justice’. DATAR was indeed a key player. The idea of a spatial framework for

5 The reader should note, for instance, that there are no European citizens, only citizens of the member states who are thereby also European citizens.
Community regional policy, too, was hatched by DATAR proposing Article 10 of the 1988 ERDF Regulations allowing the Commission to fund studies for a ‘schéma de développement de l’espace communautaire’ (interestingly, the name also of the French version of the ESDP). No additional competency was required for the Commission to get involved in spatial planning.

Rather, what the Commission planners thought they needed was a Council of Ministers to discuss their proposals. Amazingly, there is no Council of Ministers for regional policy. This was why the first meeting of ministers responsible for regional policy and spatial planning was informal, not because there was a lack of Community competency in the field.

Reframing the issue
Subsequently, the Germans reframed the issue in terms of their regulatory view of planning. Now, it was never intended that the Community should engage in regulatory planning. Nevertheless, the Germans operated as if this was the case. The first reason for this was their displeasure with the Commission’s interference with the joint regional economic policy of their federal government and the governments of the Länder. Unless they fit into the Community Support Framework (CSF), the Commission considers such policies as distorting competition. The Länder started to look on the Commission as ‘interlopers in their own backyard’ (Hooghe and Marks, 2001, 90, 96), an attitude shared by the Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs responsible for the federal input in regional policy. The Länder are also responsible for regulatory planning. If the Community were to enter the field, and this was the second reason for German misgivings, it would be the Länder who would suffer the consequences. Since the federal government has no direct involvement in regulatory planning, federal planners see no reason for the Community to get involved either. On a more general level the Germans would like the Community to be restricted to dealing with a specific number of issues, what is called a catalogue of competencies, and to leave the rest to member states. They see the next Intergovernmental Conference in 2004 as the occasion to sort this out. The German Länder in particular fear that their powers and responsibilities will be taken over by Brussels, coincidentally giving the federal government representing them on the Council of Ministers more de facto control.

Note, however, that far from standing at the sidelines, the Germans have invested heavily in the ESDP. They are certainly not against European spatial planning, but they do feel that it should be a joint task of the member states.

The Germans are not blind to the differences between their view of planning and the French one from which the Commission has drawn inspiration. On the contrary, the proactive type of French planning impresses them. Nevertheless, they want spatial planning to be from the bottom up. Rather than the Commission taking the initiative for formulating a spatial framework, Germany feels that this should be done by the member states. In this vein, the Standing Conference of the ministers of the 16 German Länder and of the federal minister responsible for spatial planning (known by its German acronym as the MKRO)
The Community shall coordinate the policies of those departments whose activities have an impact on the development of the cities and regions of the member states on the basis of objectives for spatial development formulated by member states for spatial development and a European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) to be drawn up in a process of cooperation among member states. (Akademie für Raumforschung und Landesplanung, 1996, 48)

Thus, the Germans see planning in terms of Anderson’s ‘singular sovereignty’. The division of responsibilities between the Länder and the federal level, under which the latter have a monopoly on making statutory plans, is based on the same ‘one-level thinking’. To them, sharing the spatial planning competency between several levels (standard practice in The Netherlands) does not seem much of an option.

For completeness’ sake, it is worth mentioning that German academics sometimes do argue that a degree of formalisation of European spatial planning might be needed (Benz, 2002; Graute, 2002). Also, in 2002 the French and German planning advisory councils have approved a joint declaration in favour of a Community role based on the notion of territorial cohesion.

COME TERRITORIAL COHESION

In 1996, there were other less far-reaching German proposals for the Intergovernmental Conference to amend Article 130 (now 158) with a reference to what was called ‘spatial cohesion’ (Akademie für Raumforschung und Landesplanung, 1996, 71). None of them got a hearing. Nor did the Commission get its way (Selke, 1999b, 118–19, 128). The Commission had wanted the new treaty to spell out that the twin notion of economic and social cohesion implied a Community role in spatial planning, an argument that was actually similar to the last German proposal. However, there were more urgent matters for the Intergovernmental Conference to worry about.

By that time, 1997, the ESDP was well advanced. The Commission decided to continue to play along with the intergovernmental approach. However, no sooner was the ESDP on the books than the Commission cut its losses. It also began to expunge spatial planning from its vocabulary, replacing it with ‘territorial management’ and/or ‘territorial cohesion’.

The former concept has already been discussed. The latter has its origin in the French aménagement du territoire. In its original version, aménagement du territoire required no competency. After all, it concerned the coordination of ongoing interventions. However, in the EU context it is necessary to be able to

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6 Meanwhile, two consecutive planning acts of 1995 and 1999, respectively called the loi Pasqua and the loi Voynet, have formalised what is now called aménagement et développement du territoire; see Faludi and Peyrony (2001, 258–60).
invoke an article in the treaties. As indicated, in the run up to the Intergovernmental Conference of 1996/1997, the issue had been tabled but to no avail. However, while this was going on, territorial cohesion slipped into Article 16 of the EC Treaty (Husson, 2002, 12) on the behest of none other than Michel Barnier, at that time French Minister of European Affairs, now European Commissioner for Regional Policy. The thinking behind this has been spearheaded in Limousin, one of the less favoured regions of mainland France. Its président, Robert Savy, a political heavyweight, is acting chairman of the French planning advisory body and a member of the Committee of the Regions. Previously, he had been involved in the Association of European Regions.

The underlying principle is one of spatial equity linked to maintaining services of general interest, even in remote areas where they would otherwise be uneconomical. This relates to the resistance against all-out market liberalisation. Indeed, the Communications on services of general interest invoke market failure as an argument for reining in the forces of competition. There is a cultural dimension to this. Europeans, it is argued, are rooted in their soil. They are not footloose, as ‘...the much more nomadic peoples of the North American Continent ...’ (Guigou, 2001, 4). They deserve to be supported in their desire to continue to live in the territories where they have lived for generations.

Territorial cohesion is being invoked not only in the Communication on services of general interest, but also and in particular in the Second Cohesion Report compiled under the responsibility of Michel Barnier (CEC, 2001b). Importantly, recommendations exist for expanding and amplifying the use of this concept when the next opportunity arises at the Intergovernmental Conference of 2004. Indeed, Robert Savy tried to introduce similar amendments at the Intergovernmental Conference leading to the Treaty of Nice, but to no avail (Husson, 2002, 13). The proposals were similar to those made by the Commission and also to the toned-down version of the German proposals in 1996—to amplify Article 130 with a reference to territorial cohesion and placing it on a par with economic and social cohesion. In the documents discussed, the Commission of course assumes nothing other than that territorial cohesion is a necessary complement to these twin goals of the treaty.

**Breaking the deadlock**

The ESDP process is deadlocked over the competency issue. The reason is that, for all its efforts, the Commission got no recognition from member states of a Community role in the ESDP process. The Commission wants to break out of this straitjacket. Its mission is to exploit opportunities for advancing integration (Ross, 1995). Some eyebrows might be raised, suspecting the Commission to be power hungry. Surely, power play is not beyond it? However, checks and balances are plentiful, so the danger of the Commission dominating the scene

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7 The Germans talked about spatial cohesion, but the important difference is that they wanted member states working on an intergovernmental ESDP to be in charge.
should not be overestimated. Nevertheless, the Commission has the right to take a lead in the process. This is why the first element of the proposed package is the recognition of a Community spatial planning role, conceived as the formulation of strategy and not as land use regulation. At the same time, the Commission has to recognise that it cannot go it alone. Member states have an essential role in European spatial planning which needs to be recognised. The last suggestion is to build on INTERREG, involving as it does the Community as well as member states and a whole range of other actors in what seems a good example of ‘multi-level governance’, which is much talked about these days (Hooghe and Marks, 2001).

A Community spatial planning role
Spatial planning should above all assist with what current UK jargon calls ‘joined-up’ thinking. This is also a favourite theme within the Commission these days, as advocated in the White Paper on ‘European Governance’ (CEC, 2001d), discussed above. It is inconceivable that the Commission would, as the Germans had once proposed, coordinate their spatially relevant policies on the basis of an intergovernmental ESDP. Rather, the de facto role of the Commission as a source of ideas and a guarantor of continuity in the ESDP process needs to be recognised. The importance being attached to the European treaties means that this must be reflected in an albeit limited Community competency (Martin, 2000), which by implication would require an amendment to the EC Treaty.8

To continue denying the Commission a planning role would only make sense if planning were understood to be about regulating the use of land. However, only recently, Michel Barnier (2002, 202) has confirmed:

It is not the way of the Union, as some want to make us believe, to impose who knows what kind of authoritarian planning reaching down to the level of the local land use plan. On the contrary, territorial cohesion is a favourite testing ground for novel forms of governance and for concrete applications of subsidiarity. (Author’s translation)

These new forms of governance (presumably what is meant is the open approach to coordination invoked in the White Paper on European Governance [CEC, 2001d]) must be based on the view of planning as strategic, with many actors, including the Commission, being involved and pursuing multiple, sometimes conflicting perspectives. The bottom line is that even without recognition of its role the Commission will play its part, invoking concepts like territorial cohesion for which an albeit sometimes tenuous treaty base exists and that are the functional equivalents of spatial planning.

8 The minimum would be for the member states to ask the Commission to invoke Article 308 of the EC Treaty. Upon the Commission taking the initiative, the Council of Ministers could then decide that spatial planning or, more likely, spatial or territorial cohesion was implied in the twin notion of economic and social cohesion such that the Community could and should develop an EU spatial vision. Preferably, though, the Intergovernmental Conference of 2004 should amend the EC Treaty accordingly.
Intergovernmental planning continuing

As indicated, the Commission has given up on intergovernmental spatial planning. The thinking seems to be that the reference to ‘territorial cohesion’ in Article 16 and/or the innocuous sounding concept of ‘territorial management’ (= aménagement du territoire = spatial planning), being one of the strands of the European strategy for sustainable development, is sufficient to justify a Community planning role.

Now, in ways that admittedly sound strange to English ears, territorial cohesion does articulate what spatial planning is about—packaging measures by different sectors and/or on different levels in such a way that they make sense in the spatial context.9 (See also the paper by Janin Rivolin elsewhere in this issue) The Commission would seem to be on safe ground therefore. The danger is that in the hands of the Commission territorial cohesion might become as abstract a concept as the celebrated, but spatially empty concept of a level playing field. What increases this danger is that, as indicated, the Commission is searching for indicators on which it can base territorial cohesion policy. However, such indicators may make little sense when applied in areas as diverse as Finland and Greece. In addition, spatial planning is considerably more than merely invoking indicators. It involves formulating spatial concepts and visions, an activity/process in which the member states must be involved. On this basis the Commission policy of not getting involved in the intergovernmental process needs to be reviewed.

Building on INTERREG

As indicated, INTERREG IIc has been highly successful in mobilising regional and local authorities, private consultants and universities. In addition, there is an institutional infrastructure in place to administer the hundreds of projects, with steering and programming committees and secretariats in each cooperation area. There is much emphasis being placed on adjusting this mechanism to cope with new regulations and increased funding under INTERREG IIIb. The impression is that those involved are being overburdened with administrative tasks. In contrast, what is proposed here holds out before them the prospect of more substantive work.

This is where the spatial visions concept comes into the equation. The exact ways in which this can be done remain to be explored, but it seems obvious that any extension of the ESDP process into the future should make use of transnational networks and the accumulated expertise available. Thus, the programme coordinators could form a steering group and the spatial visions building blocks for a future elaboration of the ESDP. In this way the ESDP process would be rooted, not only at national level, but in the views and perspectives of other stakeholders of European planning as well. Fortunately, ESPON includes a project on this.

9 Note that, variously, the ESDP invokes the notion, if not of territorial cohesion, then at least of territorial coherence.
**Conclusions**

Let the ESDP process continue. In particular, let the process build on INTERREG. Most importantly, encourage member states to drop their opposition to a Community planning role and recognise that a European spatial vision should reflect the Community’s point of view, not as the only perspective, but certainly as an important one. By the same token, the Commission must recognise that it cannot formulate a spatial vision of Europe on its own. In spatial planning, member state input is vital.

Does this mean what some of those with experience in the ESDP process seem to be dreading most, a return to its complexities in due course increased by the addition of new members? The answer is yes and no:

- Inescapably, multilateral consultations are the mode of operation in European integration. (The reader should never forget the benefits in terms of mutual learning!)
- A major source of ‘noise’ would be removed, namely ambivalence as regards the Commission’s role. With the Commission in the chair providing continuity, the process could have been smoother in the first instance (although, admittedly, it would have been more difficult to mobilise the resources of the member states, vital as they were to the success of the ESDP).

To resolve the issues involved, member states with influence in the world of planning need to put their heads together to evaluate the ESDP experience—the aim being to get the ESDP process out of the doldrums. The situation should be reassessed and directed away from regulatory planning. Under strategic planning, there is room for a Community perspective on the overall territory of the EU to run alongside the intergovernmental perspective.

It should be emphasised that it would be in the interest of all member states to recognise that this is the case. The Commission could proceed, even without member state approval. It may go ahead after all and produce the proposed SERDEC on its own. Member states should not be attempting to prevent this—after all, it makes sense. The main point is that member states, in particular those with experience in the intergovernmental ESDP process, should relate to this exercise in a meaningful way. Fortunately, as indicated above, Germany and France, or rather the respective advisory councils of the national governments, are taking steps in this direction.

Certainly, there will be differences between a SERDEC, if any, and the ESDP. Does this matter? Maybe one day the joint secretariats of the INTERREG cooperation areas will add a scheme of their own, building on their experiences in multi-level governance. In this way their expertise and the manifold links they have with people in the field could be made optimal use of. Maybe each secretariat should even formulate a European spatial perspective of its own. Imagine what an interesting collection of vistas of Europe from various angles that would be!

If necessary, there could be conciliation procedure to unify the various visions. Alternatively, the differences could be left for what they are—reflections
of various perspectives on Europe. Decision makers could then make use of multiple visions, weighing their advantages and disadvantages in relation to the real situation at hand. According to the relativist notion of space, there is nothing wrong with a plurality of visions with multiple strategies for one and the same territory.

This is the crux of the matter. The rejection of Community involvement was based on ‘one-level’ thinking promulgated on the absolute view of space and on the indivisibility of sovereignty. Drop ‘one-level’ thinking, embrace the notion of strategic planning in a multi-level system of governance and a Community role in spatial planning becomes unexceptional. Under the relativist view of space, multiple, indeed conflicting perspectives become normal and this seems to suit the European context better than any forced attempt to make planning the preserve of any one level of governance.

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