The Role of Local Communities in the Construction of the European Territory: Evidence from Romania

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Abstract European integration has notable impact on the territorial organization of Europe, especially after the adoption of the Treaty of Lisbon. Therefore, it became urgent to develop guidance and best practices in the fields of territorial cohesion, urban matters and spatial planning, including with regard to local governments. Despite complicated relations in a multi-level governance setting, or because of this setting, local governments are an integral part of the construction of an European territory. The paper argues that territorial cohesion and spatial planning goals will not be achieved without a complementary focus on local communities as the engines of growth. It aims to clarify issues relating the local communities’ role in shaping and implementing European strategies and concludes with some recommendations on territorial perspectives and new goals and tools that should drive the European Union towards higher democratic integration.

Keywords: • local communities • European Union law • territorial cohesion • spatial planning • Romania
1 Introduction

European integration has had a significant impact on Europe’s spatial planning. State borders have gradually faded, giving way to territorial integration and increased interdependence between European Union (EU) territories. These interdependencies arise, on the one hand, out of the implementation of EU policies with a territorial impact. On the other hand, territorial projects have demonstrated that, despite a limited territorial scope of national or regional projects, they have produced consequences in the territories of other Member States. Hence the need to harmonize the management of projects with a regional impact, so as not to exacerbate existing disparities within the Union. Therefore it became urgent to define, at European level, the guiding principles of urban and spatial planning in order to ensure the cohesion of the EU territory. Moreover, these interdependencies showed the way for the participation of and co-operation with between local authorities. This has captured EU’s attention in terms of territorial management strategies. This paper explores these issues in a European and national context.

The paper starts with an overview of the theoretical and methodological background of spatial planning. In order to relate these policies to analytical features describing EU competence on spatial planning, the second and the third section employ a multidisciplinary approach. The next two sections discuss the evolution of the territorial cohesion concept through the Territorial Agenda in terms of the need to reform the spatial planning system. The last section of the paper discusses Romania’s development planning in the context of European regional policy.

2 First steps of a harmonious development of the territory

Beyond reducing regional disparities, the notion of territorial cohesion very much underlies spatial planning issues. In addition to European strategies for a polycentric development of the EU territory, we should note the multiplicity of dispersed actions based on projects or programs leading the EU to structure itself starting from networks of local actors. Despite the absence of an express competence in spatial planning, the EU modeled the spatial planning of the European territory starting with the goals and instruments embedded in the structural and cohesion funding instruments.

Until the cohesion policy reform of 2006, the early development of the EU territory involved the creation of EU programs aimed at reducing disparities. These strategies demonstrated the existence of a territorial logic that may be associated with territorial planning. A landmark for local communities is the year 1968 when the Commission’s Directorate-General for Regional Policy was established. The DG XV’s mission is to strengthen territorial, social and economic
cohesion, thus reducing the development differences between countries and regions of the EU. To reduce disparities, the cohesion policy had to foster constant improvement in competitiveness and employment. Since 1975, with the creation of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), local governments started to benefit from financial support from the European Union within the economic and social cohesion policies. We notice that the award of such economic aid (European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund, European Social Fund European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund later replaced by European Agricultural Guarantee Fund and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development) has sometimes been made in favor of some geographical regional units that do not correspond to local legal territorial-administrative units\(^1\).

The Directorate-General for Regional Policy manages these types of funds and it co-finances investments, with a focus on the regions with the lowest GDP per capita. Moreover, through structural pre-accession instruments, the Commission supports candidate countries to develop transport networks and improve infrastructure with the same focus on the poorest regions.

We also notice that within regional action, European authorities have encouraged cross-border cooperation between local communities. Therefore, European standards create pressure through the means of ERDF funding, and it determines the creation of specific programs\(^2\) where local action involves cooperation going beyond state borders. Thus, we note that EU law directs local action beyond state monopolistic competences in terms of international relations. The State acknowledged this form of decentralized cooperation with great difficulty, since regulation of external action took place rather late\(^3\). EU institutions have encouraged direct association of local policies to European regional policies, especially concerning fund management. Besides the Commission, the European Parliament, through specialized committees\(^4\) supports the implementation of effective and efficient structural policies at regional and local level. Thus it contributes directly to the creation of favorable conditions for successful enlargement of the Union and it ensures compliance with the principles of sound financial management. All these initiatives have bluntly insisted on the need for a harmonious development of the territory of the European Union, thus excluding the non-involvement of the European Union in the management of its territory.

Specific spatial planning activities take into account the existence of four coherence criteria: geographical continuity, thematic correlation with other policies, multi-sector character of the spatial planning action and a political agreement on land use on medium and long term (Castric, 2006:86). These actions are related to spatial planning in so far as they participate in a network of EU territories through the implementation of projects, of initiatives with an EU interest built on the four general topics. Therefore, to confirm the existence of real action in spatial planning, the action will be consistent with all applicable policies in the area concerned, and also with national and regional plans, in order to
support action at EU level. These local experiments have demonstrated the organizational capacity of local territories which, under the aegis of the EU, benefit from means of financing local action and present results at a supranational level.

These resources have also had a second effect: making local initiative dynamic, which encouraged the actors interested in projects to regroup, organize and ultimately form networks capable of working together on well-defined topics and for exchange purposes (Alexandru, 2013:174). This activity has been carried out either as local sectorial associations or as permanent representations. The presence of local authorities within the European institutions, and especially within the Commission, is undeniable. Among these organizations or associations of local authorities we mention the Assembly of European Regions, founded in 1985, which aims to express the political positions of the regions. Since 1984, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions is the largest organization of local and regional authorities in Europe. This networking promotes, in its way, the spatial planning of the EU territory. Therefore, this representative phenomenon ensures a real presence of local authorities within the EU institutions, and especially indirect participation in decision making.

The emergence of the European territory and the desire to constantly organize it, in accordance with national identities, generated the creation of some relations and quasi-systematic horizontal interpenetration. The distances separating geographical areas have had little impact on building the network of local actors. What matters is the sharing of a project, of an initiative encompassing solidarity and having interests and issues that transcend national borders (Alexandru & Bălan, 2014: 580). Then the EU should encourage the development of these networks. Starting from well-defined topics, networks are being organized and they build relationships, gradually connecting territories with one another, often combining infra-national entities. The network is then an essential element of the toolbox necessary for a new vision of spatial planning (Vasseur, 1997:125).

Experiments have allowed testing the relationship between local authorities and the European Union. However, the introduction of an EU competence in the field of spatial planning appears premature. Because of national or regional sensitivities, such a competence would be seen as a further attack on the integrity of Member States, even if it would be appropriate to give the European Union a competence in the field. In fact, in order to complete its mission, the EU should have a rational development of its territory and thus contribute to global, economic, social and territorial cohesion. This approach should prevail both in the development and management of regional policy (recently reformed), and in all EU policies. Formulation of these policies becomes a necessity. Therefore, the EU gradually integrates into European treaties the emergence of such a competence that has been formulated at informal level. However, the renewal of the cohesion
policy is increasingly carrying through the formalization of such a competence, in agreement with Member States.

3 What is European spatial planning about?

A brief analysis on European policy documents on spatial planning show the use of a diverse vocabulary in this matter. Therefore, the European Spatial Development Perspective. Towards Balanced and Sustainable Development of the Territory of the European Union (ESDP) documents refer to ‘spatial development’, European Spatial Planning Observation Network (ESPON) documents refer to ‘spatial planning’, while the Territorial Agenda referred to ministers “…responsible for spatial planning and development” (TA, 2007). Using the concept of spatial planning in the EU sense does not necessarily mean précisement aménagement du territoire, town and country planning (CEC, 1997). The difference between spatial and territorial was synthesized as follows: “territory refers to socially constructed places, whereas spatial refers to less clearly defined areas which seem to be of a larger scale encompassing several territories” (Waterhout, 2008:16).

This concept cannot be addressed in the absence of some explanations concerning the theories on European integration and Europeanization. Key concepts that are used to describe the EU are: federalism, state centrism and multi-level governance (Waterhout, 2008:16). The most relevant concept for us is the concept of multi-level governance as developed by Hooghe & Marks (2001). Multi-level governance brings forth the issue concerning the holder of power and how this power is exercised at multiple levels governance with the consequence of depriving Member States of exclusive control over the development of their territory. To be more specific, the issue of the sovereignty of Member States arises, and it is explained by means of two concepts – intergovernmentalism and supranationalism. Intergovernmentalism implies control, cooperation between Member States to solve their problems, while supranationalism makes Member States work together, but it does not allow them to maintain control over their development, thus leading to decreased sovereignty (Hooghe & Marks, 2001).

Extension of competences is based on the fact that, since modern economies are made of interconnected components, if a Member State integrates one of its functional sectors due to technical pressures, continuing the integration will be required in the related sectors of other countries. The concept of spillover applies to the European spatial planning discourse too, which has amongst others the objective of smoothing the unwanted spatial impact of EU policies.
3.1 Building a UE competence in spatial planning?

The growing interdependence of EU territories has been progressive. Also gradually, as the EU deepened its policies and penetrated more and more into the territories of Member States, the issue of developing a specific competence has emerged. Since 1970, the spatial planning issue has been discussed at the European Conference of Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning (CEMAT), before the EU began to bring forward this issue in 1989. In the absence of a full competence in spatial planning, the EU approached this issue gradually and cautiously, starting from reflections and spatial development projects. This has led to the adoption of a final informal document: ESDP (European Spatial Development Perspective). Since the first informal meeting of Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning of Member States held in Nantes in 1989, until Potsdam in 1999, 10 years have passed. Meanwhile, the European Commission has worked hard for the approval of this very atypical EU document. ESDP is judged to be an unclassifiable document among acts traditionally performed at European level (Doucet, 2007:2).

For the first time, the political construction of UE confronts a new issue – the territory. Therefore, the territory is no longer considered as a functional space conditioning the implementation of EU policies, or as an institutional space, breaking the boundaries established by Member States. ESDP invites us to reflect on EU policies starting from the "territorial" issue which becomes the topic of common interest (Lucas, 2004:2). Starting from studies, statistical reviews and assessments of local situations across the EU, the ESDP emphasizes strong axes, involving the harmonization of European spatial planning. Consequently, the EU should reconsider its policies depending on territories (not vice versa) and mobilize all actors in the territory.

The EUROPE 2000 report, followed by the EUROPE 2000+ report served primarily as reference tools intended for Member States and local governments in order to draw attention to the consequences of public policy on European spatial planning. These reflections conducted academically were aimed at identifying a type of shared diagnosis, in order to develop a common vision of the European territory (Jouen, 2008:7).

The ‘adoption’ of the ESDP is paradoxical and explains why it has been called a ‘non-document’. It was adopted by the Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning of Member States, under the supervision of the European Commission, but only informally. Indeed, the Ministers of the Member States who agreed on the ESDP have recognized the territorial impact of EU policies and the European challenge to implement coherent spatial planning policies. Nevertheless, by maintaining the ESDP as an informal document, they continued to deny the evidence of an EU policy of spatial planning of the European territory, not to mention a competence
of spatial planning for the benefit of European Union at that time. This legal uncertainty is quite comfortable because it "preserves the completeness and integrity of national competences in relation to the ESDP and, consequently, of spatial planning" (Lucas, 2004:75).

Both the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee\(^1\) were in favor of such a competence. Moreover, the European Parliament expressed its wish to adopt a ‘European spatial development plan.\(^2\) The European Commission has never shied away from the possibility of establishing a EU-level spatial planning policy, founded upon by the outcomes of EU programs and innovative projects developed in the field of spatial planning before the ESDP. In some circles, suspicion remains that the Commission will use territorial cohesion as a pretext to assign competences to itself which it at present does not have (Faludi, 2004a:395).

Thus, the refusal to give legal force to the ESDP considerably limits the possibility of establishing a European regional planning policy. This informal approach allows establishing some territorial development directions, without formally binding Member States. The Commission supported this approach: since the ESDP content was consistent with the European spatial development perspectives envisaged by the Commission’s services, the latter agreed to support the intergovernmental process that led to approval of the ESDP on 11 May 1999 in Potsdam, confirming the continuation of Europe’s political integration through a policy of small steps.

### 3.2 Territorial cohesion – basis of spatial planning

The roots of the concept of territorial cohesion are identified in spatial planning practice in France, supported by Inter-ministerial Delegation for Spatial Planning and Regional Attractiveness (DATAR)\(^3\). State and regional policies and investments coordinated by DATAR, involving both cooperation between ministries and between regions, thus served as a model for European spatial planning and the European cohesion policy. We have to emphasize, though, that territorial cohesion should not be used as a synonym for spatial planning policy (Waterhout, 2008:86). We note the concern for ensuring the cohesion defined in terms of convergence and, at the same time, ensuring the coherence of policies applied to territory through cooperation.

Several stages can be identified in conceptual development. The first stage, following the development of the Spaak Report\(^4\), is characterized by an obvious concern for cohesion and coherence, to the extent that it recommends: providing a regional fund that allows both the financing of European projects and support of disadvantaged regions; ensuring coherence between national regional policies and in relation to the policy that the European Economic Community was to engage.
The second stage (1965-1985) - *eurosclerosis* - shows the growing interest of the European Economic Community (EEC) for European spatial planning (*aménagement du territoire européen*). The year 1975 stands out as a defining moment, introducing the first embryonic regional policy, characterized by a manifest concern for coherence. The third stage culminated with the adoption of ESDP.

The European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP, 1999) is the materialization of the informal agreement for territorial cohesion (although the term did not exist at the time) defining European integration and the role of planning and planners. However, in the creation of the ESDP in 1995, territorial cohesion was designed and it began to gain recognition, first in the Treaty of Amsterdam, whose Article 16 regulates services of general economic interest. Three of the many guidelines set by the ESDP, are still highly topical: polycentric development and urban-rural partnerships; equal access to knowledge infrastructure; prudent management of natural and cultural heritage. ESDP, a "hybrid and soft" document (Lucas, 2004:73), which calls for a development of a political map of the EU territory, emphasizing a balanced polycentric development. At the level of the whole European continent, this is what polycentricity amounts to: stimulating areas outside the existing core to aspire to the status of global economic integration zones (Waterhout, 2008:62). Indeed, it provides a spatial and territorial vision of Europe and emphasizes highly dynamic areas which were able to generate synergies. The ESDP aim is to spread this dynamic throughout Europe and multiply the poles.

This document allows to establish comparability criteria enabling decision makers (at all levels from local to European level) to position the planning spatial policies in relation to the entire European territory. According to Waterhout (2008:62) achievement of a more polycentric development depends on cooperation and the promotion of complementarity. The ESDP is clear about who should cooperate with whom, but not about how this can be attained. It appears as a true culture of spatial planning that tends to coordinate actions and actors to ensure territorial coherence. It promotes the principles of action, such as cooperation, anticipation, adaptability, differentiation, etc. It exceeds the strict analytical framework and provides guidance for the overall development of the European territory, favoring an integrated approach. ESDP is a reference document coordinating future territorial actions, structured vertically (from European level to the smallest entities) or horizontally (between communities) and it should establish new connections between territories.

The post-ESDP stage is marked by the acknowledgment that structural funds imply a territorial policy. The Treaty of Lisbon introduces the concept of territorial cohesion which thus becomes an important goal requiring the shared competence of the European Union, including in its meaning both the concept of
European spatial planning and the concept of territorial development. Conceptually speaking, there is a tendency to draw a distinction between spatial planning as a responsibility of the member states (and sub-national levels) and territorial cohesion policy (Schön, 2005: 389). Also, spatial policy is now seen as complementary to regional policy rather than similar. European Spatial Planning was addressed very restrictively until the adoption and ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon.

3.3 EU's territorial cohesion through the Territorial Agenda

Despite doubts about the actual contents of territorial cohesion, since 2004 informal meetings have been held regularly in order to redirect EU policies with regard to European territorial priorities. What followed was a series of defining moments for the crystallization of the concept of territorial cohesion: the Meeting of Rotterdam in 2004 seeking to understand territorial cohesion, followed by the Meeting of Luxembourg introducing into the equation territorial capital that can be mobilized in the cohesion policy.

According to Waterhout (2008:88) “the concept of territorial capital means a change of paradigm. The emphasis is no longer restricted to strongly urbanized areas, like cities and metropolitan areas. By paying attention to factors such as size of the region, quality of life, and natural resources, the paradigm has widened the focus to include virtually all sorts of European regions, including rural and peripheral ones, as long as these regions find ways to exploit their unique territorial capital so that it contributes to Europe’s competitiveness”. Organizational concerns have led to a major (informal) ministerial meeting, which was convened on 24 and 25 May 2007 in Leipzig, which resulted in the adoption of the Territorial Agenda (TA) and the formulation of the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable Urban Development.

The Territorial Agenda and Territorial State and Perspectives of the European Union (TSP) invoke a new umbrella term: ‘territorial governance’. This challenge aims to “integrate the territorial dimension in EU and national policies” instead of “creating a top-down and separate EU territorial cohesion policy” (TSP, 2007:9). Territorial governance is based on four principles: “(a) integration, i.e. building on the ESDP, (b) no new procedures or rules but better use of existing possibilities, (c) subsidiarity, and (d) facilitating development and thus supporting efficiency in achieving cohesion”. The TSP notes that “spatial development is more than territorial cohesion”.

The TA/TSP continues the path opened by the ESDP and expands the directions adopted by the latter: the polycentric development of the European territory remains topical and the Territorial Agenda encourages the development of networks of metropolitan areas and cities. This underlines the need to update some
partnerships between regions to promote the creation of territorial governance. It encourages the formation of regional clusters in terms of competition and innovation and insists on the need to support and strengthen trans-European networks for the connectivity of territories. Thus, the Territorial Agenda is undeniably rooted in the ESDP, except that it proves to be eminently oriented more towards EU territorial competitiveness – a concern that cannot be found in the ESDP. The Agenda formalized territorial cohesion for spatial planning: “The Territorial Agenda is based on the ESDP and aims to provide a strategic framework of priorities for EU territorial cohesion” (TSP, 2007: 9). However, it suggests renewed cohesion; the Lisbon strategy is dedicated to creating new synergies to make Europe's regions more and more competitive.

Although Europe 2020 Strategy is a document including the assessment of the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy in the EU Member States, it pays rather little attention to territory, promoting a rather sectoral approach. This problem has been subsequently remedied by the EU 2020 Territorial Agenda and the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion introducing the three "c": concentration, connection and cooperation at European level.

The mission of territorial cohesion is not only to correct disparities, but also to "awaken" the local and regional potential and promote connectivity of territories. Eventually, the approach seems to be a return to old European traditions to attract economic interdependence relations on which political relations can be based. The Territorial Agenda also emphasizes the need for coherence of EU policies, from design to implementation. This Agenda involves close coordination, both vertically and horizontally; and all actors – public and private – from local to European level must commit to better taking into account territorial cohesion. For this purpose, the European Union suggested the use of consultation methods involving all levels of decision, and always complying with national institutional frameworks. Open Method of Coordination has been mentioned as one way to go (Faludi, 2004:402). This method is applied in the Lisbon strategy and forms a middle road between the Community method and intergovernmental approach. This method is an instrument resulting from the Lisbon Strategy and it provides a framework for cooperation between Member States to implement policies, controlled only by means of a system of providing regular feedback to other Member States. In addition, the design of European spatial planning and the coordination of sectoral policies and intergovernmental coordination methods do not seem to anticipate full-scale the implementation of a law of EU urban and spatial planning.

This method prevents the development of an EU competence for spatial planning. Although the Territorial Agenda provides support, a "strategic framework" for the territorial cohesion policy has the disadvantage of remaining caught up in intergovernmental methods, where the Commission's role is limited and the
European Parliament and the European Court of Justice are absent. Of course, it helps and brings forward opinions about spatial planning, but it still ensures that the competence of Member States is preserved. However, the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon emphasizes that the policy of economic, social and territorial cohesion is a shared competence (Article 4 of the TFEU). Therefore, given the number and importance of the EU policies that have a direct impact on territories, it is advisable to develop a planning policy of the EU territory according to EU competence. Territorial cohesion is already a cross-cutting objective in all policies. It remains only to promote new tools based on European competences. The Treaty of Lisbon seems to favor this viewpoint.

4 Romanian spatial development in slow motion

A definition underpinning much of policy research and practice in Romania mentions that spatial planning and urban planning consist in a set of complex activities aimed at the physical configuration of space (Ianoș, 2005:13). A frequently cited definition of spatial management is that established by the ministers responsible for spatial and urban planning of Member States of the Council of Europe: spatial planning is the expression of four types of policies: economic, social, environmental and cultural. This definition emphasizes the decisive role of spatial management in the planned development of present-day human communities, with an administrative system at local, regional, national or supranational level, such as the European Union (Pascariu, 2010:17).

4.1 Aim and methodology

The main research objective of the remainder of this paper is to explore the nature and objectives of European spatial development policies as translated at national level. Therefore, we will emphasize specific objectives regarding how these policies relate to spatial development in the Romanian urban system, and we will try to identify synergies or potential conflicts between European and national approaches in this field. Although the EU action on spatial development is taken informally, through our research we will try to bring arguments for the need to regulate a spatial planning competence for the EU, even though the Member States are slightly reluctant to this process. Using Romania as a case study, the paper aims to bring evidence in favor of the idea that territorial cohesion and spatial planning goals will not be achieved without a complementary focus on local communities as the engines of growth.

This paper is based on a thorough analysis of literature and European strategic documents on the concept of spatial development and planning in the EU, and on the analysis of issues related to the spatial development of Romania after its accession to the EU. Using as a research strategy the systemic approach to territory, we can identify the mains trends on spatial development of EU territory.
This perspective emphasizes the main disparities, identifies priorities for a balanced and polycentric development, and provides a range of tools – data, indicators, typologies and methodologies – to reconfigure spatial development. Without aiming at a comprehensive approach of the spatial development measures identified in the documents concerning the national concept on spatial development, in our analysis we will illustrate the current stage of spatial issues and explain various mechanisms and techniques for solving and managing the issues related to the local level, particularly to the localities in Romania.

4.2 Romanian legal framework

The applicable legislation in Romania does not give a nominal definition of either urban planning or spatial planning. It only declares their content, specific features, objectives and ways of implementation, thus jumping to an operational definition. Thus, Law no. 350/2001 on spatial planning and urban planning stipulates, in Article 2(3), that "Territorial management is achieved through spatial planning and urban planning, which are sets of complex activities of general interest contributing to a balanced spatial development, to the protection of natural and built heritage, and to the improvement of living conditions in urban and rural areas". The pursuit of these objectives is achieved through development strategies and policies by means of spatial development plans\textsuperscript{17} and urban plans and regulations\textsuperscript{18}. We must say that the plan, in spatial planning and urban planning, is essentially a practical working tool for central or local authorities, by means of which certain development strategies and policies can be implemented.

Responsibility for the work of spatial and urban planning lies with the central and local authorities. During the last twenty years, we have witnessed a growing role of local authorities in public life, as they are entrusted to solve and manage local public affairs on behalf and in the interest of the local communities they represent. To give efficiency to the principles stipulated by the Constitution, the legislator regulated\textsuperscript{19} the normative function of the local council which has initiative and decide, according to the law, on all matters of local interest, except those assigned by law to other local or central authorities. Consequently, the local council is the one that examines and approves, according to the law, spatial and urban planning documentation of localities, establishing the material and financial means necessary to achieve them; it approves the allocation of funds from local budgets for actions against floods, fires, disasters and dangerous weather phenomena. The county council\textsuperscript{20} establishes, by consultation with local, communal and town authorities, the projects of territorial planning and management of the county, as well as projects of general urban development of the county and of local administrative units, and it monitors how they are implemented in cooperation with the local, communal and town authorities involved. Although participation of local authorities in the construction of a European territory is indirect, they are, through the exercise of local competences concerning urban planning, the
beneficiaries of EU programs and innovative projects developed in the field of spatial planning. Spatial planning and urban planning activities are associated with public administration since it is called to respond to all types of requests and is directly responsible for their proper management.

4.3 A systemic approach to Romanian territory: results and discussion

The territorial level at which spatial planning occurs is typically that of the basic administrative unit, i.e. the commune, the city, the municipality, the county. The upper level does not seem to be limited by boundaries, which is showed by the spatial planning schemes at continental level made during the last 10 to 15 years.

Romania’s accession to the European Union on 1 January 2007 still requires a complex process of economic, social, cultural and spatial integration. In this regard, the studies of 2007-2008 for substantiation of a Strategic Concept of Spatial Development of Romania are relevant for the objectives and policies of the next period. Inclusion in the National Development Plan (NDP) for 2007-2013 of some aspects of spatial development and territorial cohesion were also an expression of interest for the connection and reintegration of Romania into the territorial administrative system of the EU.

Romania's integration involves reconfiguring long-term spatial development issues in line with the Lisbon / Gothenburg Strategy, but it must be adjusted to the specific conditions in our country and to the necessity of recovering the gaps pointed out by the ESPON 2004 – 2006 studies on the EU 25 + Bulgaria, Norway, Romania and Switzerland. This involves, on the one hand, emphasizing the territorial effects of integration in the terms currently used by the EU and, on the other hand, identifying those specific features of our country's territory, which may constitute favorable conditions to accelerate development and reduce some of the existing disparities.

The categories of territories proposed to explicitly structure EU spatial development policies, according to the ESDP document, are structured on the criteria regarding the weight of urban or rural territory and accessibility. How structuring entities relate to one another is expressed by the degree of polycentricity, the central concept adopted by the European Union as the main means of balancing future spatial development at all territorial levels, from EU level to local level. Romania has an average degree of polycentricity, similar to Italy and Switzerland. Spatial development strategies for the national territory are part of long time horizons (20-25 years) for structural factors, and very long (40-50 years) for most political decisions.

Romania is present at European level through the following spatial network of localities: two metropolitan areas - Bucharest and Timisoara; 12 functional urban
areas with a population between 150000 and 320000 inhabitants, of national importance and, in most cases, of transnational importance in different degrees; 45 functional urban areas of regional and local importance.

Orientation of spatial development strategies and policies in the long term (2025 - 2030) is subject to four development vectors on which there is a broad consensus certified by the experience of updating spatial development strategies in different European countries, as well as by the conclusions drawn from the activity of the network of European institutes for prospective studies: population and labour resources; science and technology; sectoral restructuring, spatial vision. These vectors are interdependent, have some generally accepted degree of redundancy and a synergic effect on development, most synthetically expressed by the GDP per capita. The four development vectors were the basis for shaping strategic spatial development objectives, aiming to emphasize the ways to reduce disparities and enhance Romania’s natural and built heritage. The fundamental objective of long-term spatial development (2025) is Romania’s integration into the European Union by asserting its regional-continental identity, enhancing spatial cohesion and sustainable development. For spatial development (with the meaning of territory and environment), the fundamental objective is detailed in the following strategic and specific objectives:

- connecting Romania to the European network of spatial development poles and corridors;
- structuring and developing the network of urban localities, which implies the development of dynamic, attractive and competitive cities and urban areas, envisaging that in 2025 Romania will have an urban population of 66.9%;
- asserting the urban-rural solidarity, appropriate with the categories of territories, by endogenous development, based on diversity and performance, of rural areas; promoting partnerships between large urban areas and modern association types of rural communities;
- consolidating Transcarpathian relations in support of regional development.

The strategic objectives of Romania's spatial development are correlated with strategic and specific/political objectives of the Spatial Development Perspective of the European Union and candidate countries (ESDP - Potsdam 1999).

Our exposition of planning instruments reveals a rather complicated and ineffective system in practice. The system designed in the early '90s should have been reformed and correlated with changes that have occurred in the Romanian society in the last 20 years. Although administrative practice shows that this system is cumbersome and does not lead to concrete results in terms of optimizing the way development is coordinated, it has been maintained with minor changes.

The current stage of these gaps must be examined in relation to the process of Europeanization. According to Gualini (in Waterhout, 2008:164 ),
Europeanisation is not the *explanans* (i.e. the phenomenon that explains the dependent variables), but the *explanandum* (i.e. the problem that needs to be explained). Romania’s integration into the EU involves a variety of phenomena and processes causing change. Analyzing the effects of change, Lenschow (2006) identifies three processes: top-down (EU/national state); horizontal (state to state or region-to-region); around-about (national state EU national state). The processes of Europeanisation is addressed from a cyclical, more dynamic point of view. These types of effects emphasize, of course, the gap created between taking over the European regulation and the "naturalization" thereof, i.e. between adopting certain regulations and how (non)institutional actors use these regulations - by adjusting practices, redefining priorities, giving new interpretations or identifying new opportunities.

Romania remains one of the few relatively large European countries not having one national document of spatial development planning, since the National Concept of Spatial Development consists of sectoral sections, which are not interrelated. Only recently, by the Government Ordinance 27/2008, the concept of Romania’s Territorial Development Strategy (RTDS) was regulated. Experts say that, for connecting Romania’s spatial development to the spatial development of the European Union, which is shaped by the "European Spatial Development Perspective" and other programmatic documents adopted at European level, the spatial development strategy will be expressed through a Guiding Plan for Romania’s Spatial Development, which is imperative.

We may say that the cycle ‘member states cooperating intergovernmentally – adopting the ESDP – applying the ESDP – engaging in developing the EU Territorial Agenda’ is a difficult process to monitor, with consequences that are hard to predict. (Waterhout & Stead, 2007).

### 5 Conclusions

EU treaties have not confirmed a European competence on spatial planning. However, the spatial planning issue dates back to the ’60s at the European Parliament. Member States are extremely reluctant to recognize European regional planning, since it is a direct threat to the sovereign powers of the Member States regarding the spatial management of their national territories.

Therefore, the spatial planning of the EU is made clandestinely. The EU seems to be an orchestra conductor without a baton who sends via other channels the first notes of the spatial planning of the EU territory.

The reconfiguration of spatial development is fostered by the support given by local communities. It should be noted that local authorities form networks, including the fact that sometimes they find it better to borrow a European channel.
than to remain under state control for the development of specific projects in their territory.

Overall, the conclusion is that although the ESDP had a great contribution to learning, the new policy instruments, such as the Territorial Agenda, refrain from invoking spatial conceptualization at EU level.

Territorial cohesion essentially refers to the coherence of policies as to how they are related to the territory; it is an added value of the cohesion policy, without being a cohesion policy per se.

What is quite clear is that the effects of Europeanization will not lead to a harmonization of spatial planning systems and policies. The heterogeneity of Member States concerning their territories and governmental structures has led to different processes of transposing EU influence.

In short, we should say goodbye to the foundations of methodological territorialism defined as a practice of understanding the world and conducting research on it through the lens of geography and administrative divisions. Therefore problems and solutions do not stop at administrative territory level, soft planning for soft spaces is the future (Haughton, Allmendinger, Counssel, Vigar 2010). The consequence of this approach lead us to the conclusion that there is no need for a global territorial strategy at EU level, and a process of territorial debate concerning soft spaces is more appropriate.

At present Europeanization may lead more to a confluence between national planning policies and systems, emphasizing the importance of EU governance, including territorial governance.

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**Notes:**
1 Development regions as opposed to territorial-administrative regions, various forms of inter-municipal cooperation, etc.
2 Interregional Cooperation Operational Programme INTERREG IV C, http://www.interreg4c.eu/
3 As an example, we mention France for the adoption of Law no. 2007-147 of 2 February 2007 on the external action of local authorities, published in the JORF of 6 February 2007, p. 2160.
4 The Committee on Regional Development with competencies in the following areas: regional policy and cohesion regarding the European Regional Development Fund; assessment of the effects of the EU policies on economic and social cohesion; coordination
of structural instruments of the EU; outermost regions and islands, cross-border and interregional cooperation; relations with the Committee of the Regions, interregional cooperation organizations and local and regional authorities.

5 It’s about associations that bring together different types of communities depending on their economic specificity (fishing, industry, agriculture, viticulture), on their geographical location or their level (communes, municipalities, departments, regions, etc.)

6 The first representations were created in 1980, and now there are about 240 such representations. The legal status of these representations vary, as they are organized either as associations or other forms, for example as simple or mixed unions in France.

7 These networks are varied. Political networks, social networks, policy networks, networks of civil society actors, etc. participate in this action of connecting EU territories with one another. We will take an active interest in networks involving European local authorities.

8 The absence of a significant political effect of the CEMAT made the Dutch and French delegations introduce the debate at EU level. The first informal meeting of the Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning of EU Member States was held in Nantes in 1989 in the presence of the President of the European Commission at the time, Jacques Delors.

9 ESDP European Spatial Development Perspective. Towards Balanced and Sustainable Development of the Territory of the European Union


11 Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on the communication of the European Commission on "Cooperation for European territorial development 2000+", OJ C 100 of 02/04/1996 p. 65; 313/95; ESC’s opinion of 29 / 03/1995 on "Europe 2000+, cooperation for European territorial development".

12 Since the 1960s and 1970s, the European Parliament has dealt with the issue of European spatial planning, proposing an European plan.

13 Délégation interministérielle à l’Aménagement du Territoire et à l’Attractivité Régionale.

14 European relaunch, brought forward by the European Conference of Messina (1 and to 2 June 1955), has led to overcoming the crisis. A negotiation was initiated based on the Spaak Report of 21 April 1956. The report’s main topic was the creation of two European communities: on the one hand, a general economic community and, on the other hand, a European Community for the peaceful use of atomic energy.

15 After all, the ESDP identifies “only one outstanding larger geographical zone of global economic integration: the core area of the EU, the pentagon defined by the metropolises of London, Paris, Milan, Munich and Hamburg” (CEC, 1999). In this pentagon, about 50 percent of the EU’s total GDP is produced by 40 per- cent of the EU citizens on 20 percent of the total area of the EU (CEC, 1999). The distribution of such zones in Europe “differs from that of the USA, for instance, which has several outstanding economic integration zones on a global scale: West Coast (California), East Coast, Southwest (Texas), Midwest” (CEC, 1999).

16 Only Article 10 of the 1998 ERDF Regulation emphasized the possibility of adopting models of development of the European territory

17 According to Law 350/2001, any spatial development plan has only a guiding character. A separate discussion about the national territory can be held. The National Territorial Planning Scheme consists of specialized sections, "has a guiding character and is the synthesis of the sectoral strategic programmes for medium and long term for the whole territory of the country.

18 The General Urban Plan (GUP) and the Zoning Urban Plan (ZUP) focus on specific
aspects of functional management of the territory, of the traffic network, of networks of social and technical urban facilities, or of residential, recreational and sports areas, and of new production areas, etc. In addition, at GUP and ZUP level, urban planning rules are established for the use of various functional areas (land with a certain type of primary use: housing, industry, traffic, etc.) and they have a regulatory character.


20 Local public administration comprising two levels: the basic local administration, consisting of the municipality, town and commune administration; and the intermediate level of local administration established at the level of the county communities.

21 Polycentricity is expressed by an indicator that integrates the quality of population distribution according to the rank of localities; GDP distribution according to the rank of localities; size of service areas, population and accessibility.

References:


D. Axandru: The Role of Local Communities in the Construction of the European Territory: Evidence from Romania


