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Territorial Cohesion, European Social Model and Spatial Justice

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Abstract

The world of European spatial planning is littered with ambiguous and hard to comprehend terminologies. Such obscurities often occur when a term is translated from one language to another while leaving behind its wider systems of meaning. The notion of territorial cohesion, translated from the French original, *cohesion territoire*, is a victim of such a process. This paper aims to provide a deeper understanding of the concept of territorial cohesion by positioning it in the wider debate on the European social model. It suggests that the concept is not only rooted in the European model, it also extends its affiliation with social-protection to incorporate concerns about spatial-protection. It is argued that the emphasis on territorial cohesion can potentially re-conceptualise European spatial policy to embrace a spatial justice dimension. Finally, the dilemma of European social model and its spatial manifestation in terms of territorial cohesion will be discussed.

Introduction: words and meanings

The world of European spatial planning is littered with ambiguous and hard to comprehend terminologies. Such obscurities often occur when a term is translated from one language to another while leaving behind its wider systems of meaning. The notion of territorial cohesion, translated from the French original, *Cohesion territoire*, is a victim of such a process, to the extent that some consider it as being, "even a less penetrable metaphysical sequel" than the 'European Spatial Development Perspective' (ESDP) which came before it (Hall, 2005: 330). The irony is that despite such ambiguities, notions such as 'territorial cohesion' tend to spread around rapidly, and soon become part of the every day vocabularies, or as some suggest "new buzzwords" of spatial planning (Schön, 2005). This is particularly so if they project a positive perspective. In this case, ambiguity becomes an advantage because people of different convictions can sign up to them without committing themselves to any particular interpretation or any particular application. The notion of polycentricity was one such concept (Davoudi, 2003), territorial cohesion is another. Hence, it is not surprising to see

a growing body of academic literature attempting to trace its origin and make sense of its meanings and applications (Faludi 2004 & 2005, Davoudi 2004; *Town Planning Review* 2005, *Planning Theory and Practice* 2005, LILP, 2005). This article, too, aims to contribute to this debate by drawing on the work which was undertaken by the author for the Lincoln Institute for Land Policy (Davoudi, in press). The aim is to provide a deeper understanding of the concept of territorial cohesion by focusing on its link with what is known as the European model of society. Before that, it is useful to outline the chain of events and publications which in the last few years which have given political salience to the notion of territorial cohesion.

The territorial cohesion turn in European spatial policy

Two influential French officials have often been quoted as key people in promoting a cohesive Europe and for introducing the notion of territorial cohesion in the Amsterdam Treaty in 1997[1]. One is Jacques Delors, the former French finance minister and President of the European Commission between 1985 and 1995, and the other is Michelle Barnier, the former EU Regional Commissioner. (Faludi 2004, Peyrony in press). Since then, territorial cohesion has appeared in the Commission's triennial reports, first in 2001 in the *Second Report on Economic and Social Cohesion* (CEC 2001a), which used the concept to describe the uneven development of the EU territory and particularly the concentration of population and economic activity in the core area of Europe, or as the ESDP called it, the pentagon (CEC 1999)[2]; and then in 2004, when the concept was given prominence by its inclusion in the *Third Report on Economic and Social Cohesion* (CEC 2004). In the wake of the enlargement of the Union from 15 to 25 member states, the *Third Report* highlighted that the challenge of achieving territorial cohesion would be of a different magnitude, as the disparities in the enlarged EU are greater than ever before. Another significant contribution to keep the concept on the agenda came from a six-year research programme under the European Spatial Planning Observation Network (ESPON) (Davoudi, 2005), which was to provide the evidence base for the discussions about territorial cohesion and attempt to measure and identify ways of operationalising it. The concept of territorial cohesion gained further momentum after its appearance in the proposed EU Constitution which states that,

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[1] The Treaty establishing the European Community
[2] This, according to the ESDP, is an area bounded roughly by the metropolises of London, Paris, Hamburg, Munich and Milan, which although covers only 20% of the EU 15 territory, is home to 40% of its population and produces 50% of its GDP (CEC, 1999).

> "in order to promote its overall harmonious development, the Union shall develop and pursue its action leading to the strengthening of its economic, social and territorial cohesion. In particular, the Union shall aim at reducing disparities between the levels of development of the various regions and the backwardness of the least favoured regions" (Conference of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, 2004, Article 220).

The inclusion of territorial cohesion in the proposed Constitution was particularly significant and regarded as the reshuffling of the terminology which was seen to help overcome the issues surrounding the lack of EU competency in spatial planning. Hence, following the decisive 'no vote' in the Dutch and French referenda in 2005, some argued that there would be no mention of territorial cohesion for some time (Hague, 2005 quoting Peter Hall). However, the faith of territorial cohesion did not seem to be necessarily dependent on the faith of the proposed Constitution, because it continued to be a key preoccupation for the EU informal ministerial meetings (Nadin and Duhr 2005). For example, during the Dutch Presidency in the second half of 2004, the Dutch Minister, Marjanne Sint, emphasised that "territorial cohesion means incorporating a spatial planning perspective into decisions that are now made primarily on economic and social grounds" (*Shared Spaces* 2004, 4). The Minister also urged the future Presidencies "to create a clear political agenda for territorial cohesion" (ibid). The following informal ministerial meeting, held in June 2005 in Luxembourg, concluded that the key challenge "is to integrate the territorial dimension into EU policies with the aim of achieving a coherent approach to the development of the EU territory, on the basis of the concept of territorial cohesion" (EU-IMM 2005,1).

While the UK Government's priority for the Presidency during the second half of 2005 made no mention of territorial cohesion or spatial planning (Foreign Office 2005), the ground had already been laid for the 2007 German Presidency to take the agenda forward by drawing on what by then will be the final version of the scoping document on the *Territorial Sate and Perspective of the Union: Agenda 2007.* This document drew on the principles adopted in the Rotterdam informal meeting which states that, "the incorporation of the territorial dimension, as well as the concept of territorial cohesion can add value to the implementation of the

Lisbon and Gothenburg[3] strategy by promoting structured and sustainable economic growth" (EU-IMM 2004).

The above summary clearly shows that territorial cohesion is here to stay particularly in the policy vocabulary of the Directorate General on Regional Policy, where it plays a legitimating role for its continuing functions. What is less clear, however, is its exact meaning and ways of implementation. This paper argues that in order to understand the concept of territorial cohesion, we need to situate it within the wider debate about the European social model.

Territorial Cohesion: *Spatializing* the European Social Model

It is widely acknowledged that the EU spatial policy has been affected by two influential planning traditions in Europe. The first one is based on the French tradition of *amenagement du territoire* which has been described as the 'regional economic approach' to planning (CEC 1997). The other is based on the German tradition of 'integrated comprehensive approach'. As Faludi (2004, 1355) points out, the former focuses on "the location of economic development and what government can do about it, while the latter "is more about balancing development claims against the carrying capacity of the land". In other words, one focuses on reducing territorial disparities, while the other emphasises on integrating sectoral policies. It can be argued that the former is a manifestation of the French egalitarian tradition and its concerns with equity (Hall, 2005), while the latter is an indication of the German's tradition of 'holistic approach' as reflected in Heidegger's philosophical affiliation with nature. The territorial cohesion agenda draws on both of these underlying conceptions of space and spatial policy (Schön, 2005). This is clearly reflected in the *Third Cohesion Report* which attempts to shed some lights on what is a key definitional ambiguity with the concept of territorial cohesion; how does it differ from social and economic cohesion? The Report states that,

> "the concept of territorial cohesion extends beyond the notion of economic and social cohesion by both adding to this and reinforcing it. In policy terms, the objective is to help achieve a *more balanced development by reducing existing disparities*, preventing territorial imbalances and by *making both sectoral policies which have a spatial impact and regional*

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[3] The Lisbon Strategy (outcome of the European Council meeting in 2000) aims at increasing the EU economic competitiveness and the Gothenburg Strategy (outcome of the European Council meeting in 2001) promotes the integration of the sustainable development objectives in the Lisbon Strategy .

policy more coherent. The concern is also to improve territorial integration and encourage cooperation between regions" (CEC 2004, 27, emphasis added).

This implies that territorial cohesion is about targeting places rather than sectors as the focus of policy, and measuring success by examining the ways in which the ensemble of sectoral policies are affecting places and the life chances of people who live and work there. But, how does it link to European social model?

The general term 'social model' refers to 'ideal types', which according to Max Weber, are designed to capture the underlying similarities and differences of complex social phenomena (Martin and Ross 2004). Social models conceptualise the ways in which societies construct social interdependence. In market democratic social models, a combination of public policies, market mechanisms and kinship relations are drawn upon to "distribute obligations amongst interdependent members [who are] differently and unequally located in the division of labour and economically related to each other primarily by market transactions regulated by politically constructed institutions" (Martin and Ross 2004, 11). Social models shape people's access to resources through income from work and welfare state provisions.

However, if we move away from 'ideal types' to reality we will observe as many European social models as there are European countries (Esping-Andersen et al, 2002). In spite of these variations, the European social model refers to the systems of welfare state and employment relations which share enough commonality, with the exception of Britain, to be distinguished from the American or Anglo-Saxon model. While the former relies on public institutions and collective choice, the latter is dependent on markets and individual choice. The European model has been referred to by other names, too. Bill Clinton (the former American President) called it the 'Dutch model'; others labelled it: the '*poldermodel'*, or the 'stakeholder' as opposed to 'shareholder' model. A former director of French planning agency, Michel Albert, called it the 'Rhineland model' as a distinct form of a continental, west European capitalism which is different from the Anglo-Saxon model that is dominant in the United States and Britain (all quoted in Bolkestein, 1999). In all these variations, the main argument is that, the European model is a regulated market economy with a comprehensive system of social security which offers greater protection against economic insecurity and inequality than the Angelo-American model. At the heart of both models lie

centuries-old contested debates about the relations between the state, market and civic society, between individual liberty and social responsibility, between economic efficiency and social equity, between state as provider and interventionist and state as facilitator and enabler. In short, they raise significant political and normative issues.

The concept of territorial cohesion brings a new dimension to these debates by extending the application of the principles of 'social models' beyond individuals and social groups to places and territories. Hence, it suggests that different social models not only "decisively shape the structure of social stratification and the ways individuals are socialised and recruited into different social roles" (Martin and Ross 2004, 12). They also reconfigure the structure of territorial stratification and the ways territories are developed and perform different functions. Within the context of the European social model, territorial cohesion not only brings its embedded political tensions to the fore, it also gives them a spatial dimension. As pointed out by Davoudi (2004), among the myriad of definitions of territorial cohesion offered by various EU publications, none territorializes the European model more clearly than the *Third Cohesion Report*. It draws on a simple, yet powerful, rationale to convey the meaning of territorial cohesion, stating that, "people should not be disadvantaged by wherever they happen to live or work in the Union" (CEC 2004, 27).

This adds a new dimension to the debate about social models. It argues that individual's life chances are not only shaped by the extent to which "individuals are subjected to and protected from typical biographical risks (unemployment, disability, poverty, illness, old age) throughout their life course" (Martin and Ross 2004,12). They are also shaped by where they live and work; in other words, by the location and quality of places and territories; by typical spatial risks (such as inaccessibility, isolation, pollution, exposure to natural and technological hazard, place stigma). It suggests that, the quality of places where people live and work in can influence their access to economic and social opportunities and the quality of their life. Hence, the concept of territorial cohesion adds a spatial dimension, or in other words '*spatializes',* the biographical risks that people face throughout their life course. From this, it can be concluded that social models not only "conceptualise the ways in which different types of societies construct *social* interdependence" (Martin and Ross 2004, 11 emphasis added), they also construct the ways in which they structure *territorial* interdependence. Thus,

territorial development trajectories are as much dependent on the type of social models as the life chances of individuals.

While the term 'social model' is not itself value-laden, terms such as economic, social or territorial cohesion convey a strong normative dimension. They call for a specific type of social model; one which puts the emphasis on reducing disparities, inequalities and injustices; objectives that are arguably embedded in the European model of society. It is suggested, for example, that, "the cohesion principle expresses nothing but a concern for rebalancing the uncertain distributive effects of an internal market without borders and, in so doing, avoiding the pernicious risk of Europe disintegrating" (Janin Rivolin 2005, 95). Therefore, when the cohesion principle was agreed, the implementation of Community policy on territorial and urban issues became indispensable. This is reflected in *the Community Strategic Guidelines* for Cohesion Policy (CEC, 2005) which informs the implementation of Structural funds in 2007-2013 period. The Strategic Guidelines stresses that, "the territorial dimension of Cohesion Policy" should be taken into account (ibid:30) and the concept as,

> "extend[ing] beyond the notion of economic and social cohesion, its objective being to help achieve a more balanced development, to build sustainable communities[4] in urban and rural areas and to seek greater consistency with other sectoral policies which have a spatial impact" (ibid: 27)

It is within this context that the territorial cohesion debate is closely linked to the wider debate about the European social model. It calls for an extension of the underlying principles of the European model from *individuals* to *places* and territories. It calls for solidarity not only amongst European *citizens* but also amongst European *territories*. It extends the call for work-based *social-protection* to place-based *territorial-protection*. Thus, the concept not only has the potential to replace the notion of 'spatial planning' within the EU arenas as some commentators argue (Hague, 2005). It also has the potential to *re-conceptualise* it with emphasising on a new rationality for organising European space. The discourse of territorial cohesion has added a *spatial justice* dimension to European spatial policy, extending and applying John Rawls' theory of justice (Rawls,

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[4] It is interesting to note the inclusion of the term 'sustainable communities' (a UK government strategy for urban regeneration), which has crept in after the production of the so called 'Bristol Accord' under the UK Presidency in the second part of 2005 (ODPM, 2005).

1971), with its emphasis on equity, to territorial development (Levy 2003 quoted in Peyrony, in press).

The Dilemma of Social Europe

The European model and all its variances are the construct of decades of social negotiations and compromises over the balance of relationship between the state, market and the civil society. As a result, the interplay between economic efficiency and social equity has fluctuated over time and in different countries. Despite the general resilience of the model it has not been immune from pressures such as globalisation and challenges such as the shift from manufacturing to services and the slow down in productivity and economic growth which has made it difficult for the welfare systems to meet the growing demand which is arising from the changing demographic patterns and family structures (Pierson 2001). These pressures have triggered, and will do so more forcefully in the future, conflicts over distribution of resources along what Martin and Ross (2004,15) call "new cleavage lines".

Among the factors mentioned above, the most relevant and more powerfully exerted is the political decoupling of European economic integration and social-protection issues which, as Scharpf (2002, 646) points out, "has characterised the real process of European integration from Rome to Maastricht". Such decoupling would not have happened if the French Socialist Prime Minster, Guy Mollet, had had its way in the Treaty of Rome, and established the harmonisation of social regulations as a precondition for the integration of industrial market. However, if in 1957 such harmonisation was difficult to achieve among six countries, with more or less similar social models, it is now increasingly impossible when 25 diverse countries are involved.

This decoupling has created an inherent and persistent tension between the EU economic competitiveness and cohesion policies which tend to creep up every time a new EU initiative or strategy is debated. The conflict reached new heights following the adoption of the Lisbon Strategy in March 2000 by the European Council. This was damned by some political constellations as a move too far towards the Anglo-American 'ultra-liberalism'. Others, however, saw it as a necessary step towards modernising the EU economic policy. For example, just ahead of the Lisbon Submit in a speech to the World Economic Forum in Switzerland, Tony Blair, the British Prime Minster, criticised the opponents of the European Model, asking: "does Europe continue with the old social model, that

has an attitude to social legislation and welfare often rooted in the 60s and 70s, or does it recognises that the new economy demands a re-direction of European economic policy for the future?", urging the European political leaders to "make a definitive stand in favour of market reform" (quoted in *the Economist*, 2000: 17). Similar sentiments enveloped the discussions about the proposed Constitutions with parts of the French and Dutch 'No Camp' arguing that it was 'too Anglo-Saxon oriented'. However, this economic emphasis which is seen by some quarters as a new step towards the erosion of the European social model is not new. Indeed, it emerged after the introduction of the Single European Act which among other things liberalized hitherto protected, highly regulated and often state-owned public services including transport, telecommunication infrastructure and energy; sectors that are closely linked to territorial development. All this is the continuation of the hegemony of an economic policy discourse which has framed the European agenda mainly in terms of economic integration and liberalisation (Scharpf 2002). It is this hegemony that has led to continuing investment in developing economic data and indicators at the cost of social ones. This became evident in the course of one of the ESPON research projects which attempted to develop a 'territorial cohesion index' to be used in the future allocation of Structural Funds (Hamez 2005, Davoudi, in press).

As Scharpf (2002, 665) argues, the advancement of EU economic integration since 1950s "has created a fundamental asymmetry between policies promoting market efficiencies and those promoting social protection and equality", with the former being harmonised and regulated at the EU level while the latter remaining differentiated and regulated at the national level. This asymmetry has largely reduced the capacity of member states to influence the direction of their economies and to realise self-defined socio-political, and by extension spatial, goals. For example, European deregulation policies have taken away the use of public sector industries as an employment buffer at the time of economic decline. Similar dilemma can be observed in the context of territorial cohesion agenda. Here again, such decoupling has had major consequences. For example, the European competition policy has largely disabled the use of state aids in reducing regional disparities and increasing territorial cohesion; an issue which has been at the heart of the political negotiation on the post-2006 distribution of Structure Funds.

The asymmetric development of the Europeanization process has led to an increasing demand for re-creating a level playing field and re-coupling of social-

protection and economic-integration functions at the European level. However, given the diversity of national systems and the political salience of these differences, upon which people have based their life plans, it seems almost impossible to reach a common European solution (Scharpf 2002, 652). The same can be said about territorial cohesion agenda. While the economic drivers of spatial development operate within the market which is increasingly integrated at the EU level, spatial policies continue to be fragmented and subject to national discretion. Hence, achieving a level playing field in this area faces a similar dilemma to that of the EU social policy. Neither the subscription to a European spatial planning Directive nor the harmonisation of the national planning systems seem to be a feasible, or even desirable, way forward, given the diversity of such systems and their underlying social philosophies and cultural values. In an attempt to get round of this dilemma, a 'third way' has been put forward which departs from the state-centric views of EU political integration. This new mode of governing is labelled, the Open Method of Coordination (OMC).

The Open Method of Coordination
The OMC was first mentioned in the Lisbon Summit of March 2000 as a way of implementing European Employment Strategy. It was then publicized in the Commission's White Paper on European Governance (CEC 2001b), as a departure from total reliance on Community Method and its heavy-handed, regulatory approach to governing. The OMC is seen as a 'softer' mode of governing which is based on policy learning through information exchange, benchmarking, target-setting, peer review, deliberation, voluntary cooperation, and naming and shaming of those who lag (Begg et al 2001). Given that in this model the balance of power between the actors is subtle and diffused among diverse range of governmental and non-governmental stakeholders at multiple spatial scales, OMC can be seen as an example of multi-level governance (Hooghe and Marks 2001) and a way of reconciling the logic of integration and the logic of diversity in the EU.

OMC has been applied in areas where the EU has no formal competence but in which it is active and, as Atkinson (2002) points out, engages in a kind of "purposeful opportunism" aimed at expanding its role. While OMC has been deployed mainly to the field of employment and social policy, as Faludi (2005) suggests, it can be extended to the field of territorial cohesion and spatial planning. Indeed, the whole process of the ESDP resonates strongly with the OMC with soft laws, joint responsibility between the Commission and the member

states and mutual learning. Following the rejection of the EU Constitution, once again, as mentioned earlier, attentions are switched to intergovernmental procedures to follow up the ESDP process. The member states have taken the initiative to develop what is called *Agenda 2007: Territorial State and Perspectives of Europe* to be discussed at the ministerial meeting during the German Presidency. This in effect will be the successor of the ESDP. The application of the Agenda 2007 in the member States will have strong elements of the OMC.

However, it should be noted that while the OMC is conceived as a more open and democratic mode of governance which seeks to engage a wider range of stakeholders in the EU policy development, in practice it has remained a relatively elite process with little involvement of the sub-national actors, the social partners and representatives of the civic society. This also holds true for the ESDP process and its successor, *Agenda 2007*. The only major difference is that this time, the research community is represented in larger numbers and with a wider diversity largely due to the activities the ESPON Programme. Arenas such as ESPON have a major role to play in the OMC, not only as a programme of research, but also as a forum for deliberation and social learning among researchers and policy makers (Davoudi, in press).

The philosophy propagated by the EU institutions under the concept OMC is that the rules of public life will increasingly be based on knowledge that is constructed and renewed in a process of collective learning. It seems that governing by persuasion seems to be the most promising way to make European politics works, particularly in the current climate of growing tensions about the future of European integration. However, when it comes to persuasive debate about Social Europe and its spatial manifestation in the form of territorial cohesion, as Hall (2005) suggests, the fundamental question is not *whether* the state should intervene to correct the injustices that are generated by the operations of the market economy, but rather *how much* intervention, *when*, *at what level* and *in what form* should be made. These questions equally apply to the wider debate about social models. In the end, the choice is political one but, not necessarily between either the European or the Anglo-Saxon Model. May be, as Bolkestein (1999) suggests, a synthesis of both, a 'Mid-Atlantic' model, could offer a 'third way'. One thing is certain, however, and that is the need for further internationalisation of the European networks and research activities to enable cross-Atlantic debates. Some steps have already been taken by, for example,

various academic and professional associations such as the Association of the European Schools of Planning (AESOP) which runs a joint conference with its American counterpart, Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP), every five or six years. The seminar series sponsored by the Lincoln Institute for Land Policy (see LILP, in press) is another example but, more can be done to forge cross-fertilisation of ideas from across the waters.

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