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## Territorial Cohesion and the European Model of Society

Stijn Oosterlynck <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Department of Architecture , Urbanism and Spatial Planning , KU Leuven, Belgium

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## Book Review

### **Territorial Cohesion and the European Model of Society**

Andreas Faludi (Ed.)

Cambridge, MA, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 2007, 227 pp., 25\$, ISBN: 978-1-55844-166-8 (paperback)

The concept of territorial cohesion emerged from debates on the territorial structure of the European Union that took place in the 1990s and led to the adoption of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) in 1999. The core argument in the edited collection *Territorial Cohesion and the European Model of Society* is that the concept of territorial cohesion is the spatial expression of the European model of society and its concern with equity, regional diversity and sustainability. The contributing authors put territorial cohesion in its political, cultural and socio-economic context and trace how the concept travelled through the vagaries of the European policy-making process. The book follows an earlier volume, also edited by Andreas Faludi, that aimed to familiarize a US audience with the European approach to transnational planning.

Faludi sets the stage for the other contributions by introducing the European model of society. He argues that the European model “based on a mixed economy, civilized labour relations, the welfare state, and a commitment to social justice” (p. 3) is rooted in the Christian-democrat and Social-democrat mainstream of continental European politics. Faludi credits the French, especially the former French European Commission president Delors, with leading the way to the reformulation of the European model of society as the reconciliation of competitiveness and equity. Pursuing this argument further, Peyrony traces the roots of territorial cohesion to the French notion of “aménagement du territoire”, which he presents as an alternative to the US model that is based on human mobility to locations of greater economic opportunity. The French “aménagement du territoire” on the other hand promotes development in place and therefore attempts to shape the location of economic activities from the perspective of equity and seeks to maintain regional diversity. To the French lineage, Davoudi adds the German tradition of the integrated comprehensive approach in which development claims are balanced against the carrying capacity of the land.

Faludi provides a brief overview of the development of the European model after Delors, drawing attention to how the European model of society is frequently invoked as an alternative to the US model, but figures as a much more contested concept in internal European debates. Bachtler and Polverari explore the development of the European model of society further through a detailed analysis of the EU cohesion policy, whereas Camagni attempts to clarify the territorial cohesion concept by re-interpreting it as the territorial dimension of sustainability.

Robert argues that territorial cohesion should be seen as a defensive response to the territorial “destructuring” effects of globalization and market liberalization. The latter upsets the subtle balance between the improvement of living conditions through modernization and the preservation of regional culture. Robert further argues that territorial cohesion reflects the need for the territorial governance of EU policies, which are strongly sector-based, territorially incoherent and often ignore regional specificities. Drevet for his part looks at the EU cohesion policy from the perspective of the ongoing EU enlargement process and explains how the latter has made geographic criteria such as territorial cohesion more important in regional policy interventions. He also examines how Europe deals with its moving borders and assesses the potential territorial implications of the accession of possible new EU member states.

In a highly insightful chapter, Waterhout analyses territorial cohesion as a multi-interpretable storyline gluing together a discourse coalition made up of European spatial planners and lobbyists for services of general interest. Waterhout argues that territorial cohesion escaped its marginal position in formal EU politics by being linked to “services of general interest” through the “Europe in balance” storyline. The idea behind this particular interpretation of territorial cohesion is that people should not be disadvantaged in their development possibilities by where they happened to be born. Waterhout identifies three other storylines that are, more or less successfully, woven into the territorial cohesion discourse: the “coherent European policy” storyline that promotes cross-sectoral coordination among policies through a spatial planning framework, the “Competitive Europe” storyline in which territorial cohesion is re-interpreted in terms of the unique territorial capital that all regions can mobilize to improve their global competitiveness and finally the “Green and clean Europe” storyline that frames territorial cohesion in the European environmental discourse.

In another excellent contribution, Davoudi examines the key role of the European Spatial Planning Observation Network (ESPON) in challenging the dominant technical–rational approach of conventional European spatial policy research. ESPON is a multi-disciplinary European research network that promotes research on territorial development in the European Union and that provided the evidence base for the ESDP. Davoudi convincingly shows how the institutional practices of collaborative learning and deliberative decision-making that developed among policy-makers and experts involved in ESPON undermined the positivist dividing line between technical knowledge and socio-political issues, objective and subjective knowledge and experts and policy-makers. Zonneveld, in the concluding chapter, notices that the ESDP does not present spatial images as such, but only uses graphic icons. Zonneveld sees this as a consequence of the rather generic nature of the ESDP’s policy goals that, apart from the multi-interpretable concept of polycentric development, do not offer a clear vision of a desired European territorial structure.

*Territorial Cohesion and the European Model of Society* contains a wealth of inspiring insights and thoughtful analyses about recent developments in transnational planning in Europe. Although the book lacks an introductory chapter framing the various contributions and setting out the logic of the ordering of the chapters, there is a common thread running through all chapters. It is in this common thread that the strength of this edited collection lies: the embedding of territorial cohesion in the broader socio-political vision that sets Europe apart from the US and the analysis of its shifting content in relation to the day-to-day political struggles within and around the European institutions and their different

policy fields. To end on a slightly more critical note, while most authors describe in painstaking detail the policy-making fields in which the concept of territorial cohesion circulates, comparatively little attention is paid to the larger political context. The rejection of the European Constitution, which would have made territorial cohesion a formal EU objective, is an important reminder that models of society do not solely emerge from deliberations between experts and policy-makers, but are the result of socio-political struggles in society at large. The “no vote” can be made politically productive by mobilizing it as a powerful call for territorial cohesion to reinforce the spatial equity agenda in Europe.

*Stijn Oosterlynck* © 2009

*Post-doctoral research associate*

*Department of Architecture, Urbanism and Spatial Planning, KU Leuven, Belgium*