THE ENTICEMENT OF THE ESDP:

MOTIVATING (FUTURE) PLANNERS TO ENGAGE WITH EU POLICIES

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Abstract

The impact of European policies strongly depends on their interpretation and application by domestic actors. This is especially true in fields such as European spatial planning and development, which are characterised by informal agreements and fragmented competences. Consequently, EU policies only gain importance if domestic actors consider them relevant and establish links to their respective areas of influence. The European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) is often regarded as a success story in European spatial planning and is relatively well known among planners across Europe. The Territorial Agenda documents, often considered successors to the ESDP, have not been met with the same enthusiasm and interest. This contribution uses the concept of storytelling to explain why the ESDP was at least partly successful in appealing to planners. Moreover, it discusses the role and importance of planning education in fostering interest in European spatial development.

Keywords

storytelling, planning education, European spatial planning, territorial cohesion, territorial agenda

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1. Introduction

The European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP), agreed upon by the Ministers of the member states of the European Union responsible for Spatial Planning in 1999, has received considerable attention among planning researchers (see Faludi and Waterhout, 2002; Davoudi, 2003; Faludi, 2004a). This is hardly surprising, given the fact that many still regard the ESDP as the climax of European spatial planning, perhaps even the only true instance of European spatial planning. Though they often did not receive the document quite as enthusiastically as their colleagues in academia, the ESDP also left a mark on practicing planners and non-academic stakeholders across Europe. It is regarded as relatively influential in planning circles (Nadin et al., 2018, p.79) and as a key milestone in the debate on the European dimensions of spatial planning (Dühr et al, 2010, p.212). Thus, at the time its 20-year anniversary was celebrated in 2019, the ESDP remained the best-known planning document at a European scale.

To put this into perspective, we must remind ourselves of the nature of European spatial planning and the connections between the EU and planning in the member states. The European Union has no competence for land use planning, yet it shares responsibilities for several policies with spatial implications with the member states, including regional and Cohesion Policy, transport policy and environmental policy. In these policy fields, the EU makes use of the opportunities to enact legally binding regulations and to support programmes and projects through financial instruments. Additionally, the ministers of the member states might agree upon strategic, non-binding policy documents, such as the ESDP, in policy fields for which the EU has no competence through intergovernmental negotiation processes. All types of policies rely on the principle of multi-level governance, dividing responsibilities for policy implementation, monitoring and evaluation among various levels of government, ranging from the EU to local authorities. This means that domestic actors at the national, regional and local levels can have a significant impact on the *de facto* outcomes of EU policies through their actions and practices. This is also true for the field of urban and regional planning, which remains dominated by policies that offer considerable leeway regarding their interpretation, implementation and instrumentalisation (Purkarthofer, 2018b). Consequently, the impact of European policies is shaped by domestic actors and requires active interest and engagement of planners and administrators to be effective. Planning is understood here in broad terms, encompassing all activities shaping spatial development ranging from land use planning to the coordination of the spatial impact of sector policies (Nadin, 2006). In turn, European spatial planning includes all activities at the EU level shaping spatial development, such as intergovernmental strategy development and supranational policy interventions, for instance in the fields of regional policy or transport policy.

This article investigates the 'enticement' of the ESDP, employing the theoretical lens of storytelling (Hajer, 1993, 1995; Throgmorton, 1996) and the conceptual framing of understanding Europeanisation from within (Purkarthofer, 2018b). To do so, it asks why the story of the ESDP resonates better with domestic planning actors' concerns than other European strategy documents. Understanding the factors contributing to the appeal of the ESDP contributes to a better grasp of the challenges that European spatial planning is facing. The future of European dimensions of planning and spatial development will not only depend on the policies and strategies themselves, but also on their ability to foster interest in European matters and motivate (future) planners to engage with EU policies. To recognise and elaborate on this, this article raises the questions of what can be learned from the ESDP and how these findings can be incorporated into planning education.

2. 'European Planning Stories' and the Role of Domestic Actors in Their Interpretation, Implementation and Instrumentalisation

The importance of language in policy-making and problem formulation has been increasingly acknowledged in the field of planning since the publication of Fischer and Forester's *Argumentative Turn* (Fischer and Forester, 1993b). This collection of theoretical and empirical contributions highlights how language and discourses constitute reality, frame politics and shape policies, affecting planning. Throgmorton famously described planning as 'persuasive and constitutive storytelling' (Throgmorton, 1993, 1996, 2003, p.126), claiming that planners create narratives, which, in order to appeal to different actors and stakeholders, allow for diverse interpretations and contextualisations. Storytelling is thus not a one-way process but depends on the actions of both authors and audiences.

While language is of general importance for the development and implementation of policies, it can be especially crucial in areas where no formal means of policy-making exist. As the EU lacks any formal competence in the field of spatial planning, discursive elements and storylines – sometimes combined with financial incentives – are thus used to promote European ideas regarding spatial development (Purkarthofer, 2018a). Various researchers have identified European discourses and studied their role in urban and regional planning, European integration and territorial governance (see e.g. Böhme, 2002; Dukes, 2008; Waterhout, 2008; Luukkonen, 2010; Servillo, 2010; Moisio et al., 2013). A significant number of contributions highlight the need to understand the ways in which European discourses are embedded into and reused in national, regional and local contexts (Shaw and Sykes, 2005; Cotella and Janin Rivolin, 2011; Moisio and Luukkonen, 2015; Purkarthofer, 2018b).

However, storytelling must not only be understood as a linguistic process. Rather, there are many factors affecting whether stories appeal to politicians, administrators, stakeholders or the general public. Scholars have argued that images, maps and visualisations can be equally important in communicating planning in a persuasive way (Dühr, 2007; Rose et al., 2014; Speake, 2017). In addition to the textual and visual content of planning documents and strategies, procedural considerations also frame storytelling. It is thus crucial *who* tells a story and *to whom* it is told, i.e. who represents the 'authors' and the 'audience' and how their relationships are shaped by power (Fischer and Forester, 1993a) and trust (Laine et al., 2018). Moreover, the reception of stories is highly dependent on their timing and their place in a larger context (Forester, 1993), as the case of the ESDP shows.

As the degree of formality varies between different policies enacted at the European scale, most notably between legally binding regulations and voluntary intergovernmental strategies, domestic actors in the field of urban and regional planning are not always obliged to interact with EU policies. Consequently, a crucial factor which determines the impact of non-binding 'European planning stories' is whether they are successful in fostering interest and engagement among domestic actors. Depending on the actions of national, regional and local actors, European discourses can thus be used to shape, inform and support their arguments and planning decisions (Shaw and Sykes, 2005), or they can be subconsciously forgotten or consciously ignored. This leads to considerable variation in responses to European planning stories across Europe and within countries, which can only be fully understood from within, i.e. in specific local, regional and national contexts (Purkarthofer, 2018b). Nonetheless, some characteristics might support the appeal of certain stories and policies compared to others. The following section elaborates on the factors contributing to the enticement of the ESDP.

3. The Enticement of the ESDP: Language, Timing, Process and Links

The actual influence of the ESDP on planning and policy making in the member states remains contested. In 2006, a study by the European Spatial Planning Observation Network (ESPON) - as it was then titled - researched the application and effects of the ESDP, concluding that direct impacts, i.e. formal and institutional changes triggered by the ESDP, had been limited (ESPON, 2006). However, the study argued that elements of the ESDP were present in national planning discourses and arguments were taken from the ESDP if they were regarded as useful, although often without direct reference to the ESDP. The application of the ESDP and its impacts are thus difficult to trace and measure, as they are usually indirect and implicit rather than direct and explicit (ESPON, 2006, p.5). Elsewhere, the impact of the ESDP has been described as variable, with its role ranging from functioning as a tool through which domestic policy ideas are uploaded to EU level, to it being a factor in reforming national planning systems (Dühr et al., 2010, p.216).

This section aims to offer potential explanations as to why the ESDP was at least partly successful in creating interest among planners and administrators. Based on an analysis of the document itself, as well as the scientific literature on the ESDP, it identifies four factors contributing to the enticement of the ESDP: language and fuzziness, timing and focus, process and actors, and links with other policies. Clearly, these themes cannot be viewed as entirely separate from each other and overlaps and connections exist between them. They are now addressed in turn.

3.1. Language and Fuzziness

The ESDP consists of two parts: Part A introduces the policy framework of the ESDP and Part B provides background information and analyses. Across 82 pages, the ESDP thus presents a rather coherent overview of its role, policy objectives and application – as well as a discussion of EU policies with a spatial impact and the main concerns related to the European territory. While being coherent in its structure, the language used in the ESDP remains vague and leaves considerable room for interpretation. This is for example reflected in the three main policy guidelines for spatial development it presents (CEC, 1999, p.11):

- development of a balanced and polycentric urban system and a new urban-rural relationship
- securing parity of access to infrastructure and knowledge; and
- sustainable development, prudent management and protection of nature and cultural heritage.

All three policy guidelines allow for multiple interpretations, thus giving different actors the opportunity to interpret them in their own context and according to their own interests. Hajer (1995) introduces the concept of storyline to refer to an established narrative that suggests a common understanding between different actors, although their actual interpretations might differ. Hajer argues that storylines that 'sound right' hold the potential to be particularly successful and appealing to a wide audience. This is certainly the case for the policy guidelines presented in the ESDP, which represent widely accepted ideas that are easy to agree upon, especially when their exact meaning is not defined. The idea of storylines framing spatial development at the European scale was picked up some years after the ESDP was published (Waterhout, 2007; Purkarthofer, 2018a), resulting in the identification of five storylines related to territorial cohesion,[1] all of which originate from, or are already present in, the ESDP.

In the context of planning, multi-interpretability has become most apparent in relation to the concept of polycentricity (Peters, 2003; Dühr et al., 2010). In a much cited contribution, Davoudi (2003) demonstrated that the meaning of the term 'polycentricity' has remained elusive despite the increasing use of the concept in spatial policy. Polycentricity is not used as analytical concept but as policy principle, employed to serve two potentially conflicting goals at the same time – namely increasing the competitiveness of the EU in the world market and supporting a socially and spatially more cohesive Europe (Waterhout, 2002; Davoudi, 2003). Davoudi claims that the concept of polycentricity 'provokes a "positive" image, yet one which can be shaped and re-shaped to serve any given purposes' (Davoudi, 2003, p. 995). Similarly, Waterhout (2007, p. 41) argues that 'the concept of polycentric development turned out to be a real winner and was picked up by many policy documents at the European as well as at the member state and subnational levels'. Yet, the use of polycentricity in (sub-)national planning contexts reveals potential discordance between different interpretations which may surface during planning processes (see e.g. Shaw and Sykes, 2004; Schmitt, 2013; Humer, 2018; Granqvist et al., 2019). Other concepts introduced in the ESDP similarly allow for multiple interpretations due to their loose definitions, for instance 'global economic integration zones' (Richardson and Jensen, 2003; Faludi, 2018) or 'services of general interest' (Colomb and Santinha, 2014; Humer, 2014).

The ESDP remains vague not only in its text but also its visual elements. Dühr et al. (2010) claim that statements made in the ESDP remain very general and that 'the ESDP does not offer a vision of what the EU territory should look like' (p. 214). Despite initial ambitions to visualise the policies of the ESDP, policy maps turned out to be too controversial during the process leading to the ESDP and were thus ultimately omitted. However, the ESDP contains icons illustrating each policy aim in a generic and highly abstract manner (Dühr, 2007). While some of the icons hint at a spatial aspect represented through an extremely simplified nose-shaped outline of Europe, other icons are simple pictograms with no spatial dimensions at all (Faludi and Waterhout, 2002).

However, despite the lack of 'plans' or policy maps, the ESDP can be regarded as using the language of planners; although during the making of the ESDP, it became apparent that it would take time for actors from across Europe to learn each other's professional languages (Faludi and Waterhout, 2002). The division of the ESDP into policy and analysis sections clearly resembles a common structure of many planning documents.

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1   The term 'territorial cohesion' increasingly replaced spatial planning and spatial development in the EU context (see e.g. Faludi, 2006).

In both parts, the document uses maps, graphs and charts to visualise information and breaks down text into short paragraphs, highlighting policy options related to each policy aim. These choices regarding style of language and visualisation, combined with the fuzziness of the key concepts and the resulting leeway for different interpretations, supported the appeal of the ESDP amongst domestic actors.

3.2. Timing and Focus

Another factor contributing to the appeal of the ESDP was the timing of its publication. The process leading to the publication of the ESDP in 1999 started approximately ten years previously (Faludi and Waterhout, 2002). During the 1990s, the perception of the ESDP was enhanced through developments relating to other sectoral policies at EU level, trends regarding spatial development across Europe, and the relative prominence of the ESDP compared to other processes.

During the 1990s, EU Regional and Cohesion Policy started to be increasingly associated with spatial planning and development. With the passing of the Single European Act in 1988, the Structural Funds gained importance and regional policy was often justified through the objectives of economic and social cohesion. Starting from 1988, EU Regional and Cohesion Policy made use of new funding programmes, including the Interreg community initiative, which is frequently regarded as a connecting element between regional policy and spatial planning (Dühr et al., 2007). The Single European Act also provided a basis for EU-wide environmental policy, leading to the enactment of the directives constituting the Natura 2000 ecological network in 1992. In 1997, the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive, first introduced in 1985, was amended, and in 2001 it was complemented by the enactment of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive. Transport policy, unlike regional policy, had been identified as a shared EU competence already in the Treaty of Rome in the 1950s, yet EU member states did not develop joint European transport policies until the 1980s. Trans-European Transport Networks were devised and adopted in the 1990s, and financial support through EU funding mechanisms was ensured. Although these sectoral policies are not commonly understood as planning policies, they nonetheless had immediate effects for planners and administrators in the member states – thus ensuring the presence of EU policies in the daily working life of domestic actors.

The development of the ESDP also took place in a period of geopolitical transition for Europe. The fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989 resulted in a transformation of the political landscape in Europe, turning a formerly impermeable border between East and West into a relationship that had yet to be defined. The political upheaval had spatial implications, including the extension of the EU territory through the German reunification and the prospect of enlarging the EU to the East. Although negotiations regarding the EU accession were still ongoing when the ESDP was published, a chapter within the ESDP discusses the likely possibility of an enlargement that would significantly enhance the EU territory. This prospect clearly increased interest in spatial development at a European scale. In addition, the advance of economic integration and increased cooperation between member states – as well as the growing importance of local and regional communities and their role in spatial development – are mentioned as long-term spatial development trends underlying the development of the ESDP (CEC, 1999, p. 7).

Lastly, the timing of the ESDP was also fortunate with a view to competition between the ESDP and other documents and processes. Although information and communication technologies and the internet were gaining importance during the 1990s, the use of online tools and communication was less ubiquitous than today. Consequently, planners and administrators were confronted with fewer policy processes at the same time, resulting in a stronger focus of attention and resources on the ESDP.

3.3. Process and Actors

Another factor contributing to the appeal of the ESDP is the course of events leading to the publication of the document itself, which was by no means a straightforward process. Faludi and Waterhout (2002) describe with great insight the processes leading from the first ideas of a European planning document voiced in Nantes in 1989 to the presentation of the ESDP in Potsdam in 1999. There is no need to recount the events and different 'opportunity structures' coming into play here, as a short summary could not do justice to its complexities.

However, it needs to be emphasised that the process leading to the ESDP did not only produce a specific policy document, but also defined the rules for cooperation and negotiation regarding planning at the European scale. During these years, it was made customary to negotiate planning matters in informal ministerial meetings led by the 'trio' of EU presidencies (the current and immediate past and future member states holding the presidency). Although the presidencies thus shaped the agenda, adherence to the 'Corfu Method' ensured that all country delegations contributed to preparing the contents of the ESDP – thus strengthening the feeling of common ownership (Faludi and Waterhout, 2002, p. 72). The European Commission did not take a leading role in decision-making but supported the process by providing different types of resources, including interpreters, travel funding and meeting infrastructure. Despite different planning traditions and recurring disagreements regarding what the ESDP should or should not be, the feeling of common ownership prevailed in many of the countries involved and contributed to creating interest in the ESDP among domestic actors.

Moreover, an overlap between 'authors' and 'audience' was created by the fact that it was planners and administrators and not high-level politicians who drafted the texts ultimately comprising the ESDP. Faludi (1997) famously describes the professionals involved in the making of the ESDP as a 'roving band of planners', meeting in different locations across Europe and jointly defining their style of working. In addition to their role in shaping the planning discourse at the EU level, these actors worked in specific jobs in their home countries, which enabled them to ensure that the ESDP received attention in domestic planning contexts.

3.4. Links to Other Policies

The ESDP was also appealing due to its links with other policies, both at the EU and member state levels. In the ESDP, all of ten pages are dedicated to the application of the ESDP through horizontal and vertical cooperation. Especially European Territorial Cooperation programmes, such as Interreg and ESPON, were seen as important steps towards the application of the ESDP (Waterhout and Stead, 2007; Stead and Waterhout, 2008; Mirwaldt et al., 2009). However, other funding instruments within EU Regional and Cohesion Policy were also aligned with the policies presented in the ESDP. For instance, in the 2000-2006 structural funds period it was stipulated that programmes take note of the ESDP (Faludi, 2007, p.5). At the time, Kunzmann (1998, p.54 in Dühr et al., 2010) argued that these links between Community funding and the ESDP might save it from becoming a 'paper tiger'.

The links between the ESDP and planning policies at the national, regional and local level in the member states cannot be summarised concisely, as there is great variation between specific contexts. In many countries awareness of the ESDP is relatively high at the national level, intermediate at the regional level and low at the local level (ESPON, 2006, p. 21). Nonetheless, local, regional and national actors have the opportunity to establish connections between the ESDP and their respective spheres of policy-making. Different ways of applying the ESDP at the regional and metropolitan scale have for example been described in the context of the UK (Shaw and Sykes, 2003, 2005) and the cross-border North-West European Metropolitan Area (Faludi, 2001, 2004b). Purkarthofer (2018b) argues more generally that EU policies provide opportunities for instrumentalisation and support for the argumentation of domestic actors. The ways of instrumentalisation range from giving impetus to planning policies, self-promotion of cities and regions and justifying planning decisions, to challenging and renegotiating competences.

4. European Spatial Planning on the Verge of the 2020s: The Stories are Not Good, the Actors are Not Interested?

Although never renewed as initially planned, the ESDP did not mark the end of European spatial planning or discussions about spatial development at a European scale. However, a significant change in language occurred with the preparation of the Lisbon Treaty and the commitment to territorial cohesion as an objective therein. The term 'territorial cohesion' increasingly replaced spatial development in the EU context, despite the fact that there is no agreed upon definition or specified relationship with issues such as spatial planning. In light of these changes, the Territorial Agenda of the European Union (TAEU, 2007) and Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020 (TA2020, 2011) were agreed upon by the ministers responsible for spatial development. Although these documents can be regarded as successors to the ESDP, their appeal to and impact on the

planning community has been limited (Nadin et al., 2018, p.x). This section discusses the potential explanations of why the Territorial Agendas[2] (TAs) were not as successful in communicating their message and creating interest among domestic planning actors.

In addition to discourses related to spatial development and territorial cohesion, there have also been debates on urban policy taking place at the EU level. With the publication of the 'Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities' (German Presidency, 2007) occurring at the same time as the TAEU, urban and territorial issues are increasingly discussed jointly in the EU context (Faludi, 2009; Purkarthofer, 2018a). In 2016, the ministers responsible for urban matters agreed upon the Urban Agenda for the EU (EU Ministers Responsible for Urban Matters, 2016). Although a detailed analysis of the Urban Agenda goes beyond the scope of this article, it needs to be emphasised that the Urban Agenda addresses many subjects relevant to spatial planning. However, through the implementation mechanisms of partnerships, it focuses on procedural themes and leaves contents to be negotiated among experts in topic-specific partnerships (Purkarthofer, 2019). Nonetheless, as these partnerships also require commitment from domestic actors, the recommendations regarding planning education, presented in the final section of this article, are applicable to EU urban policies as well.

4.1. Language and Fuzziness

There are fundamental differences in textual and visual language between the TAs and the ESDP, starting from the TAs' considerably shorter length of only eleven pages. There are no maps, graphs or pictures in the TAs; representing a conscious decision to avoid lengthy discussion about visualisations (Faludi, 2009). However, this means that the TAs, unlike the ESDP, did not attempt to conceptualise the shape of Europe or deliberate principles of spatial organisation. Thus, while the TAs continue to promote ideas such as polycentricity, these ideas are increasingly connected to a discourse on competitiveness rather than 'spatial planning', a term that is mentioned only once in the TAEU and five times in the TA2020, as opposed to nearly 50 times in the ESDP.

Interestingly, the initial idea behind the TAs was fairly different. As a consequence of the ESPON programmes, a plethora of EU-wide research on spatial issues was available in the early 2000s (Faludi, 2009). Thus, the aim of the TAs was to produce an evidence-based document. However, this idea receded into the background and the more elaborate document, entitled 'Territorial State and Perspectives of the EU' (Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning and Territorial Development, 2005), was separated from the TA strategies and received little attention or political support. In turn, the TAs themselves became rather 'political animals', addressing their audience clearly from the perspective of the ministers and omitting any direct references to ESPON findings (Faludi and Waterhout, 2005, p.331).

As a consequence, the TAs certainly show characteristics of multi-interpretability. This starts with the term 'territorial cohesion' itself, which is 'not the clearest of concepts, but one (like polycentrism) with considerable appeal' (Faludi and Waterhout, 2005, p.331). Since it was first invoked, territorial cohesion has been stretched to include a wide range of interpretations and related to a multitude of scales (Zonneveld and Waterhout, 2005). Relatedly, other vague concepts, such as 'territorial capital', initially seemed to replace the notion of polycentricity (Waterhout, 2007, p.49) but were in the end rarely picked up by planners[3].

In addition, the dissemination of the TAs was undermined by the fact that no printed versions were released and that the TAs were not published in all official EU languages (Faludi, 2009). This meant that, despite being available on the internet in German, English and French, the reach of the TAs was unsurprisingly considerably lower, especially among regional and local actors. The increasing number of documents available online also potentially meant that 'information overload' diluted the impact of the TAs.

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2   The Territorial Agenda of the EU (published in 2007) and the Territorial Agenda of the EU 2020 (published in 2011) are very similar in their content, structure and style. Thus, they are discussed together as Territorial Agendas (TAs) if not stated otherwise.

3   However, the notion of territorial capital might provide a persuasive storyline from the viewpoint of regional development (Fratesi and Perucca, 2019).

Considering these observations regarding language, the 'conclusion must be that, where the ESDP may be considered to have been a planning document, albeit vague, the Territorial Agenda is nothing of the kind' (Faludi, 2009, p.27). As the TAs did not speak the language of planners, there was no clear target audience associated with the documents. This was supported by the fact that the objective of territorial cohesion was increasingly linked with growth and competitiveness instead of balanced spatial development. Both TA documents were accompanied by background documents (Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning and Territorial Development, 2005, 2011) which, in terms of language, scope, use of data and visual elements, bear some resemblance to the ESDP. However, these documents are more cautious in their language, referring to 'potential priorities' instead of 'policy aims' and were drafted by a considerably smaller number of actors from only a few countries. Consequently, these documents neither received political attention from European ministers or generated considerable attention among planners (Faludi, 2009, p. 26).

4.2. Timing and Focus

The enlargement of the EU in 2004 and 2007 highlighted the need to rethink spatial development at a European scale. However, since the beginning of the 21st century, the EU has faced several setbacks, including the rejection of the constitution for Europe in several countries in 2005, the economic crisis starting in 2008 and the influx of migrants which peaked in 2015 and 2016. These events, combined with domestic issues, resulted in the rise of Euroscepticism across Europe and most famously in the UK's 'Brexit' vote in 2016. Concerns about spatial development and territorial cohesion were clearly sidelined in light of these events, although it can be argued that there is a spatial dimension to all of them (Knieling and Othengrafen, 2015; Johnston et al., 2018; Sykes, 2018).

Relating not so much to timing but rather attention and resources, one could also argue that a diversion of planners towards other EU policies occurred after the turn of the millennium. Planners were increasingly involved in the ESPON programmes, which in many ways aligned with the language, knowledge and self-perception of planners, and were thus regarded as the 'mainstay of European planning' (Faludi, 2015, p.284). While the collection of spatial data and information across Europe is desirable, one could argue that ESPON contributed to the detachment of planning from the political agenda at the EU level. Studies realised under the umbrella of ESPON are said to be analytical, neutral and 'evidence-based'. Political considerations, though often present, are not addressed, and the often lengthy ESPON reports do not undergo political negotiations comparable to those found in the forging of strategic policy documents such as the ESDP or TAs. Considering the detachment of the TAs into political strategies and evidence-based background documents, one might argue that planners and the data collected within ESPON have played a bigger role in the making of the latter rather than the former.

4.3. Process and Actors

After the publication of the ESDP, support for ministerial meetings on spatial planning from the European Commission vanished (Faludi and Waterhout, 2005). Nonetheless, in 2004 the Dutch presidency took the initiative and organised a meeting that can be regarded as the starting point of the process leading to the Territorial Agendas[4]. The event held in Rotterdam was well attended, and the atmosphere was perceived as positive and even enthusiastic (Faludi and Waterhout, 2005). Two years later, during the Finnish presidency, the first draft Territorial Agenda was presented – having been prepared by a small drafting group. Finally, in 2007 the Territorial Agenda was agreed during the German presidency. Although this process relied on the same informal institutional settings as the making of the ESDP, it was considerably shorter and involved fewer actors, fewer meetings and fewer phases of negotiation and deliberation.

Undoubtedly important from the perspective of spatial planning, the making of the TAs also involved fewer planners due to the fact that no member state had a minister responsible for territorial cohesion and because of the ties between the term and EU Cohesion Policy. Instead, the negotiations in many cases involved

4   The process leading to the Territorial Agendas is not as well documented as the making of the ESDP, partly due to the increasingly digital notes and comments which cannot be accessed in archives (Faludi, 2007).

representatives from ministries of economic affairs and finance. Planners – if they participated at all - often assumed subsidiary roles (Faludi, 2007, 2009). The TAEU stipulated its review and potential renewal during the Hungarian presidency in 2011. Thus, the development of the TA2020 was in many respects a pre-arranged task rather than a process of negotiation and deliberation comparable to the making of the ESDP.

4.4. Links to Other Policies

Finally, the TAs were not as successful in establishing links with other policies as the ESDP. There is, of course, a connection between the TAs and EU-level strategies, such as the Lisbon, Gothenburg and Europe 2020 strategies and the Treaty of Lisbon, which stipulates territorial cohesion as a central EU objective. However, connections with other sectoral policies remained weak or unspecified. Furthermore, the member states were asked to recognise the priorities set out in the TAs, but the TAs did not suggest any concrete means of implementation or application (Faludi, 2009). Thus, despite addressing relevant topics, the application or implementation of the TAs has been rather weak in the member states (Nadin et al., 2018).

This is not to say that the objective of territorial cohesion or the spatial dimension of EU policies remains generally ignored. Since the publication of the Barca report (Barca, 2009), the need for EU policies to become increasingly place-based has been widely acknowledged. The introduction of new (or redefined) funding instruments within EU Cohesion Policy, namely Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) and Community-Led Local Development (CLLD), represent a clear attempt to establish stronger links between EU policies and regional and local contexts, while also acknowledging the need for flexibility voiced by domestic actors. The earmarking of funding towards Sustainable Urban Development in the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) regulation is another effort to strengthen these connections. However, these 'Territorial Delivery Mechanisms' envisage complementarity among each other (Servillo, 2017) instead of emphasising connections to the TAs.

5. A View to Planning Education: Motivating (Future) Planners to Engage with EU Policies

The previous two sections have contrasted the ESDP and the TAs from the perspective of persuasive storytelling, highlighting why the ESDP created more traction among domestic planning actors than the TAs. Ultimately, however, the aim of this article is not to give an historic account of the documents relating to European spatial planning but to derive future-oriented findings from understanding the enticement of the ESDP. The relevant questions are thus how to foster interest in European spatial development and how to motivate (future) planners to engage with the EU. Clearly, planning education plays a key role in shaping planners' attitudes towards the EU and spatial policies at a European scale.

The Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP) has defined a core curriculum and established a procedure for quality recognition for planning programmes (Lo Piccolo, 2017) – an important contribution towards enhancing planning education in Europe. Nonetheless, we observe a lot of variation regarding how EU policies and the European scale are addressed in planning education. While in some cases there are whole master's programmes focused on European spatial planning, in other programmes European processes are handled in one course, or even one lecture. Planning programmes within design-oriented planning schools might omit references to European policies and processes altogether.

The argument here is not that planning education should prioritise teaching European spatial development and territorial cohesion above all other subjects. This would be neither justified nor feasible. However, there is a need to convey to future planners that they are the ones who need to engage with EU policies. Since there will often be no obligation to do so, planning education needs to increase awareness of the active role planners need to take on when engaging with EU policies (Purkarthofer, 2018b). As Faludi and Waterhout (2002) stated in 2002, the Europeanisation of planning will require new skills not only from the international planners who want to shape policy at the EU scale, but also from ordinary professionals.

One might counter that the downturn European spatial development and territorial cohesion is currently facing does not justify the claim that greater emphasis on these issues is necessary in planning education. However, if we succeed in educating future planners in a way that avoids associations between complexity and EU policies, and highlights the potential connections between different policies and the opportunities for planning instead, European spatial planning might be resurrected in the years to come. In light of transboundary challenges such as climate change, sustainable food production and international labour markets, the European perspective is as important as ever. European spatial planning could play a key role in integrating policies at different spatial scales and ensuring coordination between different sectoral policies. It is the task of planning education now to ensure that future planners are aware of these opportunities and their own crucial role in seizing them. If planning educators are successful in fostering interest in European spatial development, the Europe of the 2020s might see a successor to the ESDP and the TAs to which planners across Europe can actually relate.

Faludi claimed ten years ago that the European planning community is in the process of renewing itself, potentially at the expense of losing its pioneering spirit and collective memory (2009). Observing the modest developments regarding European spatial planning during recent years, he might have been right when fearing the loss of interest, knowledge and capacity. However, it is not too late for planning education to find ways to motivate future planners to engage with EU policies. We need to empower them to act jointly at a European scale to develop narratives for strategic planning and spatial development, and to act within their local, metropolitan, regional or national organisations to establish connections between European planning stories and their respective area of influence.

6. Conclusion

Twenty years after its publication, the aims and policy options presented in the ESDP still inspire planning activities in various countries (Nadin et al., 2018, p.48). This article uses the concept of storytelling to explain the relative success of the ESDP in the planning community compared to subsequent documents such as the Territorial Agendas. Storytelling in this context should not be understood as an attempt to lull or manipulate actors but rather as a means to create interest in European spatial policies and communicate their *raison d'être*. To do so, European policies need to resonate with the concerns of domestic actors and need to be communicated in a way that is meaningful and useful for them.

This article argues that the ESDP was more successful in creating interest among domestic actors because it contained several attractive storylines which held the potential to be interpreted in multiple ways. Domestic actors have thus used these storylines as arguments to support their own planning objectives. Links with other policies, especially EU funding instruments, further sustained engagement with the ESDP among planners in the member states. Moreover, the long development process leading to the ESDP, which involved a multitude of actors from each member state, and its publication in a time of growing opportunities relating to European spatial policies supported its success.

Subsequent documents, specifically the TAEU and TA2020, are generally less known and have hardly produced any impacts from the viewpoint of planning (Nadin et al., 2018, p.48). This article argues that the lack of interest in these documents can in part be explained by the absence of persuasive storytelling. Similarly, a recent ESPON study claims that the ESDP has left a stronger mark on spatial planning because it was more concrete and at the same time more visionary than the TAs (Nadin et al., 2018, p.86). The TAs do not speak the 'language of planners', and thus planners do not seem to be the primary target audience. The brevity of the TA documents also impedes the establishment of connections with other policies and funding instruments. Moreover, debates related to spatial planning and territorial cohesion currently seem to lack momentum at a European scale, and are frequently sidelined by external and centrifugal forces (Dąbrowski and Lingua, 2018). As a result, the future of European spatial planning and integration remains uncertain (Cotella et al., 2020). At the time of writing this article, the Territorial Agenda 2030 is being prepared and it remains to be seen which stories are told in this policy document and whether they will be appealing to planners.

No matter how the Territorial Agenda 2030 turns out, ultimately planning education will be a key factor in strengthening the connection between debates at the European level and the daily work of planners and public servants in the member states. If the mechanisms of policy-making at the EU level are meaningfully explained and interest in European issues is sparked, (future) planners could be more eager to engage with the EU level. In addition to creating links between EU policies and domestic issues, this could, in the long run, lead to a resurgence of European spatial planning as a meaningful forum to discuss large-scale concerns in Europe.

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