



FAKE OR REAL EU TERRITORIALITY? DEBATING THE TERRITORIAL UNIVERSE OF EU POLICIES

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Abstract. This paper provides new insights into the main pillars of the territorial universe of EU policies, by undertaking a systematic overview of European Union (EU) key territorial development reports, agendas and programmes. These include the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP), the three Territorial Agendas, and the European Territorial Observatory Network (ESPON) reports. The evidence shows widespread territoriality, understood as a process of incorporating a territorial driven policy design, implementation and evaluation paradigm, still largely dominated by territorial development and territorial cohesion policy rationales. However, the socioeconomic policy prism continues to dominate the design and analysis of EU policies by EU entities.

Keywords: ESPON, EU cohesion policy, territorial capital, territorial cohesion, territorial development, territoriality, territorial policies.

Introduction

By the end of 2016, when invited to speak in an INTERACT workshop in Berlin, the author requested the audience, made mostly by EU INTERREG programmes' directors and officials, to write on a white board what was for them the definition of territorial cohesion. As expected, the proposed meanings varied enormously across the board, both in their conceptual approaches and policy visions. Indeed, a wealth of literature underscores and amplifies the challenges related to obtaining a commonly agreed definition for the territorial cohesion concept (Luukkonen & Moilanen, 2012; Van Well, 2012; Abrahams, 2014; Medeiros, 2016a; Dao, Cantoreggi & Rousseaux, 2017). These challenges are, for the most part, related largely with a misunderstanding of the concept of territory, in particular in relation to the implementation of policies.

In this context, there has been a few attempts to uncover this territorial dimension of policies, by proposing territorial analytic dimensions (Medeiros, 2016b, 2017a; ESPON, 2018) and territorial keys (Zaucha, Komornicki, Böhme, Świątek & Żuber, 2014; Zaucha, 2017) of policies. Despite these attempts, the terms territory and territorial, in this policy context, continue to be often confounded or paralleled with other related notions such as 'region/regional' or 'space/place'

(Luukkonen & Moilanen, 2012). Indeed, from a pure conceptual perspective, territory is a bounded space where a group of individuals exert some kind of control and sovereignty (Delaney, 2009).

As an essential counterpart of territory, territoriality ‘refers to any form of behaviour displayed by individuals and groups seeking to establish, maintain, or defend specific bounded portions of space’ (Gold, 2009, p.282). Being a legal construct, as well as a powerful innovation which has contributed to legitimate and solidify modern states over a specific territory (Sassen, 2013), territoriality can mirror facets, such as inter-territoriality (Perrin, 2010), and is largely embedded in social relations (Storey, 2016). Alternatively, a territory is sometimes understood as an outcome of territoriality, as it becomes a nation state (Elden, 2010), which is still the most evident territorial unit on the global landscape (Haggett, 2001). For some, however, the current scenario of nation-building holds potential challenges and threats, for instance in forging territorial traps (i.e. border barriers, see Newman, 2010; Medeiros, 2018a), tragedies (i.e. politicised, excessive centralized nation-state apparatus, etc., see Agnew, 2017), and poverty resulting from a lack of flexibility (i.e. a collection of fixed territories limits functional relations and transnational planning; Faludi, 2012, 2018; Medeiros, 2019a).

The exact ramification of territory, territoriality and policies is, again, a complex one (Elden, 2013). In part, this complexity is a result of increasing territorial interconnectedness (Kidd & Shaw, 2013) at a cross-border (Blatter, 2004), transnational (Dühr, 2018) and global level (McClintock, 2010). The salient point is that territoriality¹, understood as a process of incorporating a territorial driven policy design, implementation and evaluation paradigm, can only be properly analysed and measured *via* a theoretical framework which advances and outlines a clear set of pillars and respective components, to form a territorial universe of policy strategic design, implementation and evaluation. This is the primary challenge of this paper: to present a territorial universe theoretical framework for analysing territoriality processes. For this, the author analysed key EU territorial development reports and agendas, in order to identify their degree of territoriality. These included the ESDP and the territorial agendas (TA) and other literature. Next section presents the proposed theoretical approach for the territorial universe for territoriality, based on the findings of the previous section. And the following section will apply the proposed theoretical approach to the ESPON programme reports and the EU cohesion reports. The last section concludes.

¹ The introduction of the novel concept of ‘territoriality’ follows from the author’s opinion that mainstream EU strategic policy guidelines largely lack a clear territorial dimension, as they are guided by mainstream econometric policy mantras. Hence, in this article, the author proposes a ‘territorial universe’, supported by main territorial related policy pillars and respective components of territoriality, for policy design and implementation, as an alternative (more territorial) policy vision for EU, national and regional development policies. In other words, the proposed territoriality concept adds a different and, according to the author, a complementary perspective, to existing territorially related policy concepts, such as territorial cohesion and territorial development. For instance, whereas territorial cohesion entails a policy rationale in which less developed regions should present higher development trends, in a certain period of time, *vis-à-vis* more developed regions, territoriality is supposed to guide the design and implementation of public policies with the ultimate goal of adding a territorial character, and ultimately make them more efficient and effective to all involved territories.

From the European Spatial Development Perspective to EU Territorial Agendas

Revisiting the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP)

Published in 1999, the ESDP (EC, 1999) has never been updated, despite the systematic territorial enlargement of the EU. Its main achievement, however, was probably the attempt to elevate territory into a new and key dimension of EU policies. The arguments backing this EU territorial policy approach were based on the increasing European integration, leading to more intensive relationships and inter-dependencies between cities and regions, and the importance of spatial planning to avoid increasing regional disparities in a context in which it was impossible to compensate for regional productivity disparities. In a practical manner, the ESDP proposes a territorial policy implementation and spatial planning approach, entailing, amongst others:

- integrated spatial development: policy integration *via* a co-operative setting up of sectoral policies;
- multi-level governance: co-operation between different governmental and administrative levels;
- balanced development: strengthening economic and social cohesion in less developed regions, promoting a polycentric urban system, securing parity of access to infrastructure and knowledge;
- sustainable development: prudent management and protection of nature and cultural heritage;
- territorial cooperation: transnational and cross-border and interregional cooperation;
- rural development: promoting a new urban-rural relationship.

In various ways, the ESDP introduced, for the first time, a European spatial planning policy rationale, as well as the strategic spatial concept of polycentric development (polycentricity) (Asprogerakas & Zachari, 2020). One of the main challenges of the ESDP was the establishment of a shared knowledge base which provided solid evidence of territorial processes across the EU (Böhme, 2016). However, the spatial vision that the ESDP represented ended up not being sufficiently attractive for EU member states to get a handle on the territorial cohesion policy (Janin Rivolin, 2005). Hence the elaboration of the TA.

A need for a simple Territorial Agenda message?

The first two TA (2007, 2011) were presented as action-oriented political frameworks to add a territorial policy dimension flavour to mainstream EU policy development strategies (Lisbon, Gothenburg, Europe 2020). In almost every way, the TA content was built upon the ESDP rationale, aiming at promoting a polycentric territorial development of the EU and ultimately at supporting a territorial cohesion (more harmonious and balanced development) policy goal. Instead, in recent programming periods, EU cohesion policy has generically followed a broad neoliberal policy orientation: the growth vs. the development and cohesion rationales (Medeiros, 2017b). However, this palpable neoliberal trend, justified by an economic context dominated by a deep financial crisis (2008), can hold far-reaching negative implications for the implementation of the TA goals. Indeed, existing literature has shown that, in the past decade (at least), there have been no territorial cohesion trends at the national level, despite the positive impacts associated with EU Cohesion Policy investments in promoting territorial development in many policy arenas and territories (Medeiros & Rauhut, 2020).

In this context, one can regard the proposal for the Multiannual Financial Framework for EU Cohesion Policy 2021-2027 as a positive strategic development as regards its proposed policy ra-

tionale, since it adds two additional main policy goals to the mainstream policy dimensional triad (economy – smart growth, society – inclusive growth, and environment – green growth): (i) a Smarter Europe; (ii) a Greener Europe; (iii) a more Social Europe; (iv) a more Connected Europe; and (v) a Europe closer to citizens. Crucially, the latter two main policy goals somewhat contribute to a new revival of the territorial dimension of EU cohesion policy, by rendering the place-based approach even more potent, and by placing a parallel focus on sustainable urban development across the EU, as well as strategic transport and digital networks.

Under this new scenario, the Draft Territorial Agenda 2030 (DTA, 2019) was developed with a simplification and policy effectiveness purpose. In sum, it sets out to ‘ensure that the need for a sustainable future for all places and people is addressed appropriately, and that the territorial dimension and the diverse potential of places across Europe are taken on board by all relevant policies’. By proposing to reduce territorial inequalities *via* a ‘Greener’ (Healthy Environment, Circular Economy, and Sustainable Connections) and more ‘Just’ (Balanced Europe, Functional Regions, and Integration Beyond Borders) Europe, the Territorial Agenda 2030 maintains the territorial vision for a more balanced and cohesive territory, whilst elevating the notions of functional regions, policy integration and environmental sustainability as crucial strategic pillars (Fig. 1).



Figure 1. Main objectives of the EU Draft Territorial Agenda 2030
Source: DTA (2019).

By embracing a more simplified approach, the Territorial Agenda 2030 intends to extend its messages to a broader audience than the one captured by the previous two. Indeed, by the time the first TA was released (2007), territorial cohesion, ‘a permanent and cooperative process involving various actors and stakeholders’ (TA, 2007, p.5), was one of the EU policy buzzwords. However, it was, and still is, a widely misunderstood policy notion, thus restricting the core message of this agenda to a limited number of stakeholders. To achieve the goal of territorial cohesion, the TA defined the following policy priorities:

- strengthen polycentric development and Innovation through networking of city regions and cities;

- form new forms of partnership and territorial governance between rural and urban areas;
- promote regional clusters of competition and innovation in Europe;
- strengthen and extend trans-European networks;
- promote trans-European risk management;
- strengthen ecological structures and cultural resources.

For all the political intents of the first TA, the EU mainstream policy agenda was mainly guided by the Lisbon strategy (Mendez, 2011). This strategy maintained a previous EU policy encouragement to the territorial development triad: economic growth and innovation, social inclusion and environmental sustainability. A similar non-territorial vision supported the EU Europe 2020 strategy (Zaucha et al., 2014) for growth and jobs: smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. In this context, and to take a fresher territorial look upon this, yet again, non-territorial policy vision, a new TA was presented in 2011.

Following the previous TA, the second one presented a similar policy rationale to support territorial cohesion in Europe (TA, 2011), which was a new EU goal introduced by the Treaty of Lisbon (Faludi, 2013). For Walsh (2012), the TA provided a significant political endorsement to a place-based policy narrative, as well as to strategic spatial approaches to policymaking. By considering that place-based, multi-level governance, integrated development, and horizontal coordination approaches to policy making contribute to territorial cohesion, this new TA set up the following territorial development priorities for the EU:

- promote polycentric and balanced territorial development;
- encourage integrated development in cities, rural and specific regions;
- promote territorial integration in cross-border and transnational functional regions;
- ensure global competitiveness of the regions based on strong local economies;
- improve territorial connectivity for individuals, communities and enterprises;
- manage and connect ecological, landscape and cultural values of regions.

Taking into consideration recent territorial development trends in the EU, the Territorial Agenda 2030 draft report reaffirms the policy framework for action towards territorial cohesion, by 'ensuring a future for all places and people in the EU, building on the diversity of places and the subsidiarity principle' (TA, 2019, p.2). For this, this updated Agenda provides the following main strategic orientations for spatial planning, as a means to strengthening the territorial dimension of policies, at all governance levels:

- place-based development: by paying more attention to the diversity of places, and their development opportunities and challenges;
- integrated territorial development: by finding the optimal balance between sustainability, inclusiveness and competitiveness;
- strategic spatial planning: by increasing coherence between all EU, national and sub-national policies;
- multi-level governance approach: by implementing the subsidiarity principle;
- good government and governance: as a pre-requisite for long-term sustainable increases in living standards, investment, social trust and political legitimacy;
- sustainable development and climate change: as a pre-requisite for implementing the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

As seen, though in different ways, the ESDP and the three TA bring to the table a significant pool of territoriality potential policy analytic dimensions. These include, for instance, the notions of polycentric development, multi-level governance, place-based development, strategic spatial planning, integrated territorial development, territorial governance, sustainable territorial development

and territorial connectivity. In a complementary manner, Zaucha et al. (2014, p.254) identified five main territorial keys which can ‘translate the TA 2020 into a set of policy tasks and policy coordination arrangements’. These are: (i) accessibility; (ii) sparsely populated areas; (iii) territorial capacities/endowments/assets; (iv) city networking; and (v) functional regions. Also important is the inclusion of the concept of territorial capital within this territorial universe for territoriality, in order to move towards a cognitive and relational approach to territorial development (Camagni & Capello, 2013).

The territorial universe for territoriality

A google search for the term ‘territorial policies’ presents only one immediate match associated with the European Commission (EC), its Knowledge Centre for Territorial Policies (EC, 2020). The resulted takeaways are: (i) territoriality is yet to be at the forefront of global and national policy strategic approaches; and (ii) the EC has, at least, shown some interest in placing territoriality in their policy making (i.e. place-based approach, Barca, 2009) and evaluation processes (i.e. territorial impact assessment – TIA), EC, 2013a). Indeed, as Stutz and Warf (2012, p.368) postulate ‘in conventional usage, development is a synonym for economic growth’. This perennial attention directed to the economic aspects of development are also manifested in many OECD Reports (i.e. OECD, 2012), in studies on EU cohesion policy (i.e. Bachtler, Martings, Wostner & Žuber, 2019), and even in mainstream literature on development processes (i.e. Mackinnon & Cumbers, 2011). And even authors who recognize that ‘growth is achieved through positive interactions between factors such as infrastructure provision, educational attainments, innovation and the promotion of an entrepreneurial culture’ (Beer & Clower, 2019: 4), place particular emphasis on the economic dimension of development by systematically invoking the growth rationale *vis-à-vis* a more encompassing development and cohesion rationale (Medeiros, 2019b).

Hence, putting territoriality front and centre, and thus setting the stage to placing a more territorial approach to designing, implementing and assessing policies, there is a need to attract the academic community working on development policies to this broader theoretical rationale of development rather than the mainstream growth policy design approaches. It is true that some scholars have been increasingly promoting the policy rationale for sustainable development (Sachs, 2015). However, their theoretical rationale on the concept is, in our opinion, far from clear (Medeiros, 2020) and can be largely confused with the notion of territorial development (Medeiros, 2018b), one of the proposed territorial universe pillars of territoriality (Fig. 2), which will be briefly detailed in the following topics.

Territorial Development

As a rule, the implementation of policies under a territorial context tends to increase their efficiency in delivering territorial development (Greiner, 2014). Positive or intended development processes usually imply improvement in several dimensions (Potter, Binns, Elliott & Smith, 2008). These can include economic, social, environmental, governance and spatial planning conditions. Moreover, territorial development encompasses several spatial scales, from urban to global development (Medeiros, 2019b). More widely, the territorial development context of several places, as is the case of Europe, ‘is viewed as particularly diverse, requiring geographically differentiated policy responses and coordination across sectoral policies and scales of governance to ensure that the potential of individual territories is maximized’ (Walsh & Allin, 2012, p.380). These distinct

territorial contexts and specific territorial assets influence the success of EU cohesion policy implementation (Bachtrögl, Fratesi & Perucca, 2020). Taking this into account, in recent years, a smart specialisation approach (McCann & Ortega-Argilés, 2019) presented ramifications with the policy place-based approach which stresses the importance of local actors in policy design, thus requiring significant demands on regional governance capabilities (Pagliacci, Pavone, Russo & Giorgi, 2019).

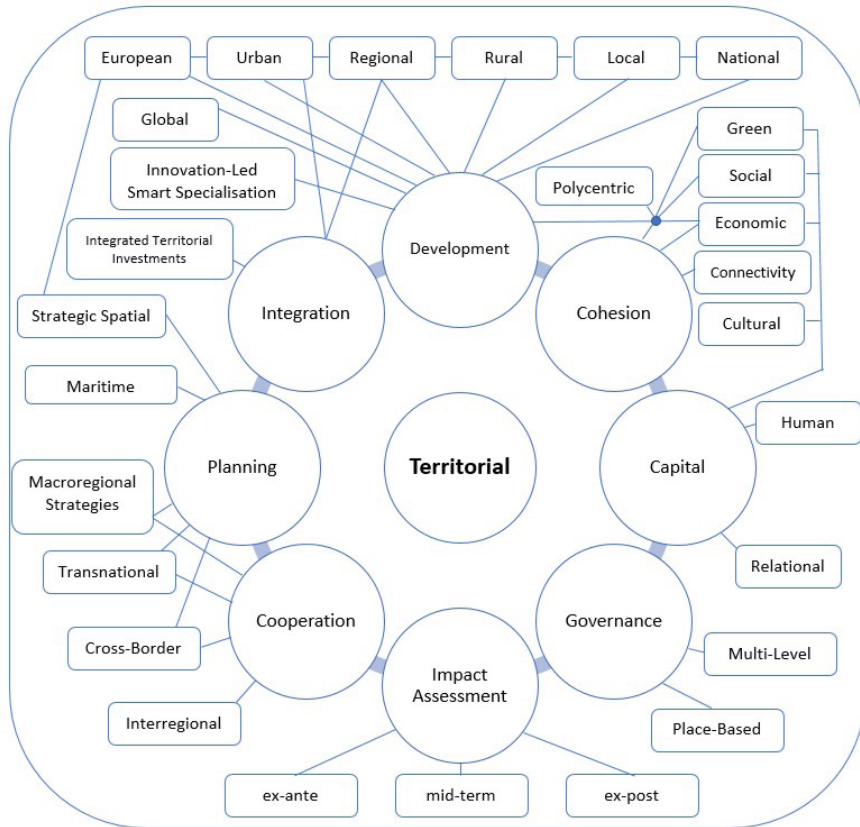


Figure 2. The main pillars and components (territorial universe) of Territoriality
Source: author’s own elaboration.

Territorial Cohesion

Just like territorial development, the territorial cohesion concept is multidimensional (Medeiros, 2016a; Bradley & Zaucha, 2017). These dimensions differ in the way that, over time, a territorial cohesion process requires the less developed areas, in a baseline scenario, to show higher levels of development than the more developed ones. This has proved to be a particularly difficult to achieve in terms of policy goal, especially at the national territorial level (Medeiros & Rauhut, 2020). For some, the EU territorial cohesion vision builds on the counteraction or mitigation of spatial imbalances, as well as the increasing policy effectiveness aiming to maximise the exploration of territorial characteristics (Asprogerakas & Zachari, 2020). Being a holistic concept, territorial

cohesion entails not only the need for improving socioeconomic cohesion and environmental sustainability, but also territorial governance and cooperation processes, as well more balanced and polycentric development processes. This concept of polycentrism was developed in the ESDP as one means to avoid excessive economic and demographic concentration in the core areas. Moreover, the notion of territorial cohesion is also closely connected with the 'place-based' approach, as the latter concept supports the creation of equal opportunities for an optimal use of the territorial capital of each region, thus leading to a more balanced territorial development (Barca, 2009). In an ideal scenario, development policies, such as the EU cohesion policy, should aim at achieving territorial cohesion, since, from a theoretical standpoint, it is achievable (Zauchá & Böhme, 2020).

Territorial Governance

Territorial governance can be understood as a procedure of organization and coordination of different actors with the ultimate goal of supporting territorial cohesion processes at all territorial levels (Asprogerakas & Zachari, 2020). For Stead (2014) there are three distinguishing characteristics of territorial governance, *vis-à-vis* other types of governance: (i) managing territorial dynamics, (ii) assessing territorial impacts and (iii) delineating policy boundaries. To be effective, territorial governance should follow both multi-level and place-based approaches. For Faludi (2012, p.197) the concept of multi-level governance implies a territorial connotation since it refers to 'the interaction between nested territorial administrations'. In this stance, public policies should also incorporate national policy agendas (Crescenzi, Fratesi & Monastiriotti, 2020) as well as national spatial planning agendas. Crucially, EU cohesion policy is a unique platform to implement multi-level governance policy models under shared management procedures, by involving all territorial levels (Fratesi & Wishlade, 2017). Moreover, evidence from the implementation of EU policies shows that interventions inspired by the place-based territorial governance approaches demonstrate higher positive results as long as this approach is not enforced (EC, 2015).

Territorial Cooperation

As the name indicates, territorial cooperation entails a cooperation process between territories. This can take place under several distinct forms (Medeiros, 2015), but is commonly analysed *via* three main processes, following from the implementation of the three EU INTERREG strands: (i) cross-border cooperation; (ii) transnational cooperation; and (iii) interregional cooperation (Medeiros, 2018a). On the whole, territorial cooperation is also a territorial governance process. Nevertheless, its EU relevance justifies its elevation as a pillar of territoriality. A clear example of its importance is the creation of EU macro-regions, which entered into the EU lexicon around 2005 and, since then, have contributed to the achievement of EU policy goals by addressing transnational development processes and by connecting actors in new ways, despite relying heavily on political commitments between the participating actors (Plangger, 2016). In addition, it is also argued that macroregional strategies lead to greater cohesion and competitiveness across larger European spaces, by addressing common transnational challenges (Pagliacci et al., 2019). Notwithstanding, in Europe, the most impactful territorial cooperation process is the cross-border cooperation (Reitel, Wassenberg & Peyrony, 2018), which, since 2008, has led to the implementation of more than 70 European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) (Evrard & Engl, 2018).

Territorial Planning

Usually known under the Anglo-Saxon denomination of spatial planning, territorial planning is influenced by several policies (environmental, energy, transport, competition, maritime, cohesion and rural development, cooperation, and urban) produced under EU legislation (CoR, 2018). Of equal importance is its relatively high profile on national policy agendas of certain governments (Colomb & Tomaney, 2020), even though it varies from country to country (Stead & Meijers, 2009). As Faludi (2010, 2-3) argues 'policies must be integrated and based on an appreciation of the territory and its potentials'. This clear association between territorial planning and territoriality is reinforced by Dühr, Colomb & Nadin (2010, p.4-5), as they maintain that 'the European dimension of spatial planning arises from a recognized and growing need for coordination of spatial development trends and EU spatial policy across policy sectors, across levels of government from the EU to the local level, and across national borders'. This dimension is now visible in EU territorial cooperation (INTERREG) programmes (Medeiros, 2018a), the ESPON programme (Waterhout, 2008), EU macro-regional strategies (Sielker & Rauhut, 2018), cross-border planning processes (Durand & Decoville, 2018) and maritime spatial planning (Zaucha & Gee, 2019).

Territorial Capital

First proposed and defined by the OECD (2001, p.13), territorial capital refers to 'the stock of assets which form the basis for endogenous development in each city and region, as well as to the institutions, modes of decision-making and professional skills to make best use of those assets', the concept of territorial capital has rapidly gained currency in contemporary research, since it presents a convincing case for encapsulating several policy sector related forms of capital, such as social, cultural, environmental, economic, human, and relational. Later on, this relatively novel concept was further developed by Camagni and Capello (2013) into a more intricate and complex set of components, which include: (i) public goods and resources; (ii) intermediate, mixed-rivalry tangible goods; private fixed-capital and toll goods; (iv) social capital; (v) relational capital; (vi) human capital; (vii) agglomeration economies, connectivity and receptivity; and (viii) cooperation networks. As István Tóth (2015) claims, in general, researchers tend to distinguish around five to seven types of capital when analysing the territorial capital concept. Its relevance for territoriality, however, comes from its importance to determine regional attractiveness, and hence to influence development policies (Fratesi & Perucca, 2018).

Territorial Integration

As expressed in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, sustainable development should be achieved in a balanced and integrated manner (UN, 2015). Likewise, the EU Urban Agenda highlights that successful development policies can only be achieved through an integrated approach (Urban Agenda, 2016). This territorial policy integration rationale reverberates across several national and international entities, as a means to improve the effectiveness of public interventions (EP, 2016; Glinka, 2017). Moreover, an effective policy response to development goals, may often require an integrated approach which combines soft and hard measures (EC, 2015). The integrated investment strategies were introduced by EU cohesion policy to support a thematic, rather than a sectoral, policy approach (Asprogerakas & Zachari, 2020). This implies a linkage of both sectoral and horizontal policies and a focus on territorial multi-level governance, by placing an emphasis on institutions at all territorial levels. It also implicates a strategic spatial planning process, by making the most out of potential functional territorial interlinkages (Zaucha et al.,

2014). Crucially, for Zonneveld and Spaans (2014) the emphasis on policy territorial integration is particularly important for the regional level, especially because it provides specific frameworks for implementing policy place-based principles (EC, 2015).

Territorial Impact Assessment – TIA

There is a widespread consensus that all policy investments require a proper evaluation policy framework to ultimately assess their relevance, effectiveness and efficiency. This policy evaluation process can be operated at several periods in time (ex-ante, mid-term and ex-post) and should preferably aim at assessing the main impacts of the evaluated policy (EC, 2013b). Following this relatively recent fascination for the territorial dimension of policies, and driven by the ESPON programme, EU entities have gradually understood the advantages of implementing a holistic and territorial policy evaluation framework to assess their policies: the TIA methodologies (see Camagni, 2009; Fischer et al., 2015; Medeiros, 2017c). Hence, this TIA pillar of the proposed theoretical policy territorial universe framework should be placed at the same level as the other six pillars.

The ESPON contribution to territoriality

The ESPON programme resulted from a strong need for comparable territorial evidence at the EU level, in order to support European spatial planning policies (Böhme, 2016). Implemented in 2002, its first programming period (until 2006) involved more than 600 researchers, and produced a substantial body of new knowledge on policy impacts, EU territorial trends. For the second programming period “many territorial development topics were deepened and a stronger emphasis was put on TIAs and scenarios. Furthermore, European-wide applied research projects were complemented with tailor-made studies for specific territories involving decision makers from those territories in participatory research processes” (Böhme, 2016, p.63). In essence, the ESPON programme provides the evidence base and enhanced empirical support for European territorial development policies (Walsh, 2012). A detailed analysis on the relation of the ESPON reports and the seven pillars of territoriality (Table 1) provide the following main conclusions:

- with few exceptions, the ESPON has produced a wealth of evidence on territorial development processes across Europe. Some reports, however, focused mostly on a specific dimension of territorial development, such as environmental sustainability or territorial governance;
- ESPON is at the genesis of the production of TIA analysis, both from a methodological standpoint and from its operationalisation in specific case studies. It is curious, however, that these TIA studies have been reduced over time. Also, the selected TIA methodologies have been excessively simplified (e.g. Quick-Check TIAs), thus making their use questionable from a scientific standpoint;
- the territorial cohesion pillar can also be related to several ESPON reports, mainly in the first two programming periods;
- the contribution of the ESPON to the remaining four pillars of territoriality (territorial governance, territorial planning, territorial cooperation and territorial integration) have been less visible. However, some key reports have provided valid and updated scientific analysis on crucial territorial aspects of these pillars;
- in sum, the ESPON programme has provided a valid contribution to territoriality within the European context. However, this contribution has been gradually losing momentum in pillars such as TIA and territorial cohesion, and could also gain by being reinforced in others such as territorial governance and territorial integration.

Table 1. The ESPON reports and the pillars of territoriality

ESPON reports	DEV	COH	CAP	IMP	GOV	PLA	COO	INT
2002-2006								
1.1.1 Polycentricity	X	X						
1.1.2 Urban-Rural	X							
1.1-3 Enlargement and Polycentrism	X	X						
1.1.4 Demographic Trends	X			X				
1.2.1 Transport Trends	X	X	X					
1.2.2 Telecom Trends	X							
1.2.3 Information Society	X							
1.3.1 Natural Hazards	X					X		
1.3.2 Natural Heritage	X							
1.3.3 Cultural Heritage	X			X				
2.1.1 Transport Policy Impact		X		X		X		X
2.1.2 R&D Policy Impact		X		X				
2.1.3 CAP impact				X				
2.1.4 Energy	X			X				
2.1.5 Fisheries	X			X				
2.2.1 Structural Funds Impact	X	X		X				
2.2.2 Pre-Accession Aid	X			X				
2.2.3 Structural Funds	X			X				
2.3.1 ESDP IMPACT				X				
2.3.2 Governance				X	X	X		
2.4.1 Environment	X			X				
2.4.2 Zoom in	X	X		X				
3.1 Coordination								
3.2 Scenarios	X					X		
3.3 Lisbon Strategy	X	X						
3.4.1 Europe in the world	X							
3.4.1 Economy	X			X				
4.1.3 Indicators				X				
1.4.1 Small and Medium Cities	X							
1.4.2 Social Dimension	X	X						
1.4.3 Urban Functions	X							
1.4.4 Flows	X							
1.4.5 Tourism	X							
3.4.3 MAUP						X		
2007-2013								
Attractiveness – ATTREG	X							
Cities – FOCI	X							
Climate change – ESPON Climate	X	X		X				
Demography – DEMIFER	X							
Economic Crisis – ECR2	X	X						
Energy – ReRisk	X							
EU directive – ARTS	X	X	X	X				
EU 2020 Strategy – SIESTA	X							
Globalisation – TIGER	X							

ESPON reports	DEV	COH	CAP	IMP	GOV	PLA	COO	INT
Governance – TANGO	X	X			X			
Green economy – GREECO	X							X
Growth poles – SGPTD	X							X
Innovation – KIT	X	X						
Land use – EU-LUPA	X							
Neighbour Regions – ITAN	X	X						X
Poverty and exclusion – TIPSE	X							
Rural areas – EDORA	X			X			X	
Scenarios – ET2050	X	X						X
Seas – ESaTDOR	X							X
Specific types of territories – GEOSPECS	X	X						
Services of general interest – SeGI	X	X						
Territorial Cooperation – TERCO	X						X	
Territorial impact assessment – TIPTAP	X			X				
Town – TOWN	X	X						
Transport – TRACC	X	X						
Agglomeration economies – CAEE	X							
Airports – ADES	X	X						
Convergence regions – SURE	X	X						
Cross-border development – ULYSSES	X					X	X	
Energy – NSS	X						X	
European cooperation – TranSMEC	X						X	
Growth poles – GROSEE	X	X						
Indicators for Territorial Cohesion – KITCASP	X	X				X		
Integrated strategies – RISE	X							X
Islands – EUROISLANDS	X							
Landscape – LP3LP	X	X					X	
Landscape – LIVELAND	X					X		
Metropolitan regions – BEST METROPOLISES	X							
Metropolitan regions – METROBORDER	X					X	X	
Metropolitan regions – POLYCE	X	X						
R&D – AMCER	X	X		X				
Rural migration – SEMIGRA	X							
Rural regions – PURR	X	X						
Scenarios – SS-LR	X					X		
Territorial diversity – ESPON TEDI	X	X						
Territorial governance – SMART-IST	X				X			
Territorial impact assessment – EATIA	X			X				
Territorial performance – TPM	X			X				
2014-2020								
Geography of New Employment Dynamics in Europe	X	X		X				
Global FDI Flows towards Europe	X							
SMEs in European Regions and Cities	X							
Low-Carbon Economy – LOCATE	X			X				

ESPON reports	DEV	COH	CAP	IMP	GOV	PLA	COO	INT
Inner Peripheries – PROFECY	X							X
Possible European Territorial Futures	X			X				
Territorial Governance and Spatial Planning – COMPASS	X	X				X		
Financial Instruments and Territorial Cohesion	X	X		X				
Green infrastructure – GRETA	X							
Circular Economy – CIRCTER	X							
Impacts of Refugee Flows – MIGRARE	X			X				
Youth Unemployment – YUTRENDS	X	X						
Territories with Geographical Specificities – BRIDGES	X	X			X		X	
European Territorial Reference Framework	X	X			X			
Technological Transformation & Transitioning of Regional Economies	X			X				
Sustainable Urbanization and land-use Practices in European Regions – SUPER	X	X						
European Shrinking Rural Areas Challenges, Actions and Perspectives for Territorial Governance – ESCAPE	X				X			
Quality of Life Measurements and Methodology – QoL	X							
Territorial Impacts of Natural Disasters – TITAN	X			X		X		
Regional Strategies for Sustainable and Inclusive Territorial Development – ReSSI	X				X			
Thinking and Planning in Areas of Territorial Cooperation – ACTAREA	X						X	
Spatial Dynamics and Strategic Planning in Metropolitan Areas – SPIMA	X				X	X		
Linking Networks of Protected Areas to Territorial Development – LinkPas	X							X
Territorial and Urban Potentials Connected to Migration and Refugee Flows – MIGRATUP	X			X				
Territorial Scenarios for the Baltic Sea Region – BT2050	X						X	X
Common spatial perspectives for the Alpine area – Alps 2050	X				X		X	
Future Digital Health – eHEALTH	X						X	
Material Cultural Heritage – HERITAGE	X			X				
Cross-border Public Services – CPS	X						X	
Cross-Border Cooperation – TIA CBC	X			X			X	
Maritime spatial planning – MSP LSI	X					X		
BIG DATA	X							
Urban-rural connections in non-metropolitan areas – URRUC	X	X						X
EuropeaN Sustainable Urbanisation through port city REgeneration – ENSURE	X	X						

ESPON reports	DEV	COH	CAP	IMP	GOV	PLA	COO	INT
Adapting European Cities to Population Ageing: Policy Challenges and Best Practices – ACPA	X							
SHARING – Stocktaking and assessment of typologies of Urban Circular Collaborative Economy initiatives	X							
MISTA – Metropolitan Industrial Strategies & Economic Sprawl	X							
TOURISM – Carrying capacity methodology for tourism	X					X		
BusDev – Business Development Opportunities at External EU Borders	X						X	
ERMES – ESPON European Research for Maritime Eco(nomic)clusters governance Strategy	X			X				
DIGIPLAN – Evaluating Spatial Planning Practices with Digital Plan Data	X					X		
TEVI – Territorial Evidence Support of European Territorial Cooperation Programmes	X						X	

Note: DEV – development; COH – cohesion; CAP – capital; IMP – impact; GOV – governance; PLA – planning; COO – cooperation; INT – integration

Source: own elaboration.

EU Cohesion Reports and Territoriality

Mainstream literature on EU cohesion policy reveals systematic attempts to link it with economic narratives: (i) a redistributive mechanism for the European economy; (ii) a vehicle to raise productivity, employment opportunities and competitiveness (Crescenzi et al., 2020); a long-run convergence process (Percoco, 2017), a means to boost regional economic growth (Crescenzi & Giua, 2020), by focusing on economically backward regions (Gagliardi & Percoco, 2017; Di Cataldo & Monastiriotis, 2020), and a focus on results (Berkowitz, Monfort & Pieńkowski, 2020). At the same time, several authors recognise that EU cohesion policy operates in a variety of policy sectors covering not only the economic but also other policy spheres, including social, territorial accessibility and environmental aspects (Capello & Perucca, 2019; Berkowitz et al., 2020). As a main implementation vehicle for the EU's strategic goals and respective agendas (Dąbrowski, Musiałkowska & Polverari, 2018), EU cohesion policy has served as a direct response to economic recession periods (Crescenzi & Giua, 2020). Broad remarks such as these could reflect a low level of territoriality of EU cohesion policy. The analysis of the EU cohesion reports' content (Table 2) provided, however, the following main take-aways:

- the use of economic universe related terms clearly dominates the texts of all cohesion reports;
- the terms related to the social and environmental universes are also more substantial than the ones related to the territorial universe;
- within the territorial universe, territorial cohesion is the most cited pillar, soon followed by the territorial cooperation pillar;
- certain territoriality pillars are vaguely mentioned in the cohesion reports: territorial integration; territorial capital and territorial planning.

In synthesis, the territorial universe of the cohesion reports is relevant, but it is side-lined by the mainstream economic, social and environmental policy prisms. Furthermore, within the territorial universe, the territorial cohesion pillar is the only one with a relatively relevant and systematic presence in these reports, which is a sign of a relatively low relevance of territoriality in these reports.

Table 2. The territorial universe mentions on EU cohesion reports

Cohesion Report	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th
Territorial Universe	13	59	36	38	145	117	69
Cohesion	0	14	8	14	39	38	26
Development	0	8	1	2	5	4	2
Cooperation	0	0	0	0	11	19	13
Capital	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Integration	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Planning	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
Impact Assessment	0	0	0	1	24	8	0
Governance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Economic Universe	244	628	386	336	486	587	359
Social Universe	206	339	255	126	248	305	216
Environment Universe	146	167	165	100	201	158	129

Source: own elaboration.

In more detail, the first cohesion report presents an almost fully centred socioeconomic policy rationale. Even so, it expresses the need for more resolute action in territorial planning (EC, 1996), which was greatly influenced by the ongoing preparation of the ESDP. In addition, it expresses the notion of territorial imbalances as a major challenge for EU policies. This latter notion is also widely used in the second cohesion report, alongside the notion of territorial disparities. What is striking, is the dedication of a full topic on territorial cohesion, clearly related to the policy goal of achieving a more balanced development of the EU as a whole (EC, 2001). Likewise, the third cohesion report dedicated one full topic to territorial cohesion, by implying that citizens should not be disadvantaged by the location in which they live or work (EC, 2004).

From the third to the fourth cohesion report there are no substantial visible changes in the use of territorial universe related notions. Nevertheless, the term territorial cohesion is used on 14 occasions as in the second cohesion report. More particularly, a short topic on this concept is presented in the summary and conclusions. What is remarkable is its systematic association with economic prosperity and demographic imbalances across territories. Conversely, this report revitalises the ESDP rationale by highlighting the importance of supporting polycentric development, improving transport infrastructure, and offering key services to surrounding rural areas, as a means to achieving territorial cohesion (EC, 2007). Then again, the notion of territorial development is, as in previous cohesion reports, associated with the need to achieve a more balanced and sustainable territorial development process within territories. Interestingly, this is the first cohesion report to introduce the notion of territorial impacts, in reference to a study on the territorial impacts of the Common Agricultural Policy.

In 2010, the EC published the fifth cohesion report, soon after the Lisbon Treaty entered into force. As is known, this Treaty included territorial cohesion, alongside economic and social cohesion, as an EU policy goal. In this context, the territorial universe increased its importance expo-

nentially from this cohesion report onwards. As regards the territorial cohesion notion, it is related to the policy need to give ‘particular emphasis on the role of cities, functional geographies, areas facing specific geographical or demographic problems and macro-regional strategies’ (EC, 2010, p.xxviii). Moreover, territorial cohesion is linked to: (i) reinforcing sustainable development processes; (ii) accessing services of general economic interest; (iii) a pursuit of a more functional and flexible policy approach; and (iv) the need for a territorial analysis.

The sixth cohesion report does not add much to the previous one when regards the explanation of territorial cohesion. Crucially, an explanation box is provided with the exact rationale presented in the fifth cohesion report. Instead, the notion of territorial cooperation is largely presented across this report, mainly due to the fact that, since 2007, it has become one of the main goals of EU cohesion policy. As such, a detailed explanation on the evolution (financial distribution) of the EU INTERREG programme’s three strands (cross-border, transnational and interregional) is provided in a box. However, more modestly, this report reinforces the need for using the TIA of EU policies, following from the previous report. In particular, it stresses that the Committee of the Regions ‘has adopted a Territorial Impact Assessment [TIA] strategy, which aims to take account of the territorial impact of EU policies on LRAs and to increase the visibility of TIA in the pre-legislative and the legislative process’ (EC, 2014, p.200).

Finally, the seventh cohesion report dedicates a full chapter to the territorial cohesion process. At the outset, it invokes the fifth cohesion report rationale of this concept by linking it to ‘the environmental dimension of sustainable development and the use of flexible functional geographies for territorial development’ (EC, 2017, p.96). Further on, it relates this notion to territorial cooperation processes, which contribute to reducing border obstacles, and the adoption of common territorial development strategies. What can be considered unexpected is the lack of references to the notion of integrated territorial investments, since they have become a policy buzzword in the current (2014-2020) cohesion policy programming period. It is also interesting to see the absence of the notion of TIA in this report, even though the notion of impact assessment is used three times.

In a complementary way, based on the information provided on the DG REGIO webpage, there are four key priorities for regional funding support, supported by an economic growth rationale perspective. In a wide sense, the broader territorial policy vision is not only absent in these key priorities, but also in the seven remaining thematic objectives. It looks evident, however, that all these 11 thematic objectives, if implemented in an effective manner, have the potential to promote territorial development processes and to boost the territorial capital across the European territory. This also holds true for territorial cohesion processes if the related investments largely favour less developed *vis-à-vis* more developed regions (Table 3).

Conversely, DG REGIO stated that the EU is making specific efforts to support certain categories of regions and communities, which include: (i) Europe’s outermost regions; (ii) urban development; (iii) rural development; (iv) Northern Ireland: the peace programme; (v) regions in candidate and potential candidate countries (enlargement of the EU); and (vi) mountains, islands and sparsely populated areas. As such, DG REGIO is clearly adding a territorial flavour to its policies. In this regard, there is a specific focus on urban and rural development policies. Furthermore, transnational and cross-border regions are financially supported *via* the EU cohesion policy goal of European Territorial Cooperation. Likewise, the EU policy tool of Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI), aims to make it easier to run territorial strategies that need funding from different sources, and has the potential to promote a more ‘place-based’ form of policy making. It is also important to highlight the increasing recognition from EU bodies on the need to use TIA procedures for a

more comprehensive and holistic perspective of the main impacts of EU policies. In conclusion, there is clear evidence of a certain degree of territoriality in the EC regional development policies, with obvious room for improvement.

Table 3. Potential relation between the EC regional development policies and territoriality pillars

Objectives and fields of activity for ERDF	DEV	COH	CAP	IMP	GOV	PLA	COO	INT
Key Objectives	Research and innovation	X	X	X				
	Information and communication technologies	X	X	X				
	SME competitiveness	X	X	X				
	Low carbon economy	X	X	X				
Remaining Thematic Objectives	Climate change and risk prevention	X	X	X				
	Environment and resource efficiency	X	X	X				
	Transport and energy networks	X	X	X		X		
	Employment and labour market	X	X	X				
	Social inclusion	X	X	X				
	Education and training	X	X	X				
	Efficient public administration	X	X	X		X		
Further fields of activity	Competition policy	X	X	X				
	Health	X	X	X				
	Culture	X	X	X				
	Tourism	X	X	X				

Note: DEV – development; COH – cohesion; CAP – capital; IMP – impact; GOV – governance; PLA – planning; COO – cooperation; INT – integration

Source: own elaboration.

Conclusion

This paper aims to contribute towards the increasing attention given to the territorial dimension of policies and how it should be analysed. It does so by presenting a theoretical framework with seven main pillars and respective components of a territorial universe for territoriality, understood as a process of incorporating a territorial driven policy design, implementation and evaluation paradigm. These pillars and components were selected based on EU territorial driven policy documents (ESDP, TA) and relevant literature, and were then used to assess the degree of territoriality of the ESPON programme, the EU cohesion reports and the DG REGIO development policies.

The findings show that there is an EU policy concern for applying a territoriality approach to some of their financed policies, in spite of a prevailing econometric mainstream policy design rationale (the economic growth rationale), with which social and environmental policy goals have been jointly anchored, for several decades. Indeed, the support for the ESPON programme reveals the extent in which the EC recognises the need for a territorial driven analysis of many of its policies and programmes. More fundamentally, the ESPON reports have contributed to increasing EU

territoriality, mainly by presenting evidence of territorial development and territorial cohesion driven analysis across the EU territory, since 2002. Although to a minor degree, some of the ESPON reports have also covered the remaining proposed five pillars of a territorial universe for territoriality: (i) territorial capital; (ii) TIA; (iii) territorial integration; (iv) territorial cooperation, and (v) territorial planning. In this regard, ESPON has served, for instance, as a fundamental scientific platform to launch and apply the first TIA methodologies.

The analysis of the (seven) EU cohesion reports, however, demonstrates how territoriality is still very much the poor parent of EU policies (i.e. EU cohesion policy) when it comes to the analysis of their implementation and effects by the EC. It is true that the ‘fuzzy signs’ on the territorial universe pillars observed in the first cohesion report have gradually given place to a reinforced presence of some of them in subsequent reports. In particular, it should be highlighted that the second cohesion report was one of the first documents which presented the policy notion of territorial cohesion, which was further debated in future reports. Furthermore, the fact the INTERREG Community Initiative became one of the goals of EU cohesion policy in 2007 (European Territorial Cooperation) led to an increasing use of the policy notion of territorial cooperation. A similar trend occurred with the use of the TIA when it started to become part of the EC lexicon around 2010.

In conclusion, the analysis indicates that crucial achievements have been made by the EC to support territoriality both in the design, the implementation and the policy implementation phases. A recent example (May 2020) can be testified by an INTERACT workshop with territorial driven policy design entitled: Bringing Territoriality into INTERREG (INTERACT, 2020). This is just another tell-tale sign of the EC recognition of the advantages of designing their programmes and policies with a territoriality approach. It is also visible by the increasing attention given to the use of TIA methodologies to assess the main impacts of EU related policies and programmes. The question is: how long will take for the EU, as well as national and regional institutions, to fully replace the mainstream economic driven development policies, albeit with a social and environmental favour, by fully territoriality driven policies? To take this research agenda further, however, there is a need for a wider appreciation of non-EU policies at all territorial levels and to present concrete evidence of the advantages of territoriality *vis-à-vis* mainstream unidimensional or three-dimensional policy design, implementation and evaluation framework paradigms.

Finally, at a more practical level, it is important to highlight the challenges ahead to consolidate the proposed territoriality approach. In this regard, the ESPON programme, in our view, has been slow to catch on its educational mission to transmitting this territorial approach to development policy across Europe. Instead, it is generally viewed as just another ordinary source for financing research work, often times favouring a few number of entities located in the northwest of Europe. Likewise, the new TA needs to be revised in order to better respond to the contemporary territorial challenges in view of the emergence of new territorial processes and phenomena which tend to exclude less developed territories, and problems created by territorial governance processes which do not match functional relations. In all, to be widely accepted, a territoriality approach needs to offer a range of practical and contemporary territorial development, territorial integration and territorial cohesion solutions for all territories.

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