



Federal Ministry  
of the Interior, Building  
and Community



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# Discussion Forum on Spatial Development

**Spatial Development Policy for a Just and Green Europe:  
„The Territorial Agenda 2030“**

A MORO research field





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# Foreword

Dear Reader,

In recent years, it has become increasingly apparent that developments with a spatial impact do not stop at national borders. Whether global economic dynamics and their drawbacks such as the financial and economic crisis in the first decade of this millennium, the increasingly visible effects of anthropogenic climate change, migration flows or the COVID-19 pandemic. Territorial cohesion in the EU is more important than ever before.

In view of these and other circumstances, European spatial development faces continuing major challenges. Areas are increasingly interlinked, without administrative responsibilities being able to keep pace with these developments.

In recent years, greater attention has also been paid to regional and transnational disparities in the EU. The new version of the „Territorial Agenda 2030“ takes this fact into account by addressing the issue of a green and just Europe. The ministers responsible for spatial planning will adopt the Territorial Agenda 2030 on 1 December 2020 during Germany’s EU Council presidency. At the same time, pilot actions will start at the end of the year. One such pilot action has been launched as a Demonstration Project of Spatial Planning (Modellvorhaben der Raumordnung, MORO) by the Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (BBSR). In this context, German and European pilot regions will implement strategic projects in the field of services of general interest. These projects, falling under the heading of „A future for lagging regions“, will run until 2023.

This year’s Discussion Forum on Spatial Development on 3 September 2020 in Hannover gave well-known experts the opportunity to share ideas about the objectives and the implementation process of the Agenda. This booklet summarises the key contributions and indicates the prospects for an integrated European spatial development policy.

I wish you an interesting read.

Dr. Daniel Meltzian

Head of Division „European Spatial Development Policy; Territorial Cohesion“  
Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community

# Content

Foreword.....	4
Spatial Development Policy for a Just and Green Europe – Welcome .....	6
Territorial Agenda 2030: A future for all places .....	10
Territorial Agenda 2030 and „A Just Europe“: Keynote of Professor Simin Davoudi .....	13
Panel discussion: „How could the European spatial development policy for a more just and greener Europe be given new impetus on the various planning levels?“ .....	18
International perspectives on the TA 2030 from European states .....	24
Perspectives of state and regional planning/development in Germany on the TA 2030 .....	33
Statement from the perspective of the European Committee of the Regions, Minister Birgit Honé, Minister for Federal and European Affairs and Regional Development of Lower Saxony .....	39
Conclusion & recommendations.....	44
Contact.....	45
Imprint.....	46

# Spatial Development Policy for a Just and Green Europe – Welcome

Dr. Daniel Meltzian

Head of Division „European Spatial Development Policy; Territorial Cohesion“, Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community



Figure 1: Dr. Daniel Meltzian (Photo: ARL)

On behalf of the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community, it is my great pleasure to welcome you today to this year's Discussion Forum on Spatial Development. This year's conference is a hybrid event, i.e. some participants are in attendance with us here at the Congress Centrum, but the majority of viewers and contributors are with us virtually or are following the event online.

The content of today's discussion forum revolves around spatial development policy for a just and green Europe and, above all, the Territorial Agenda 2030. The goal of the EU is to promote economic, social and territorial cohesion in Europe, and the

Territorial Agenda represents the pan-European, policy strategy document to this end. The document specifies the current challenges facing Europe as a territory as well as the targets and a joint framework for action for addressing these challenges. By the time the German Council presidency comes to an end in late 2020, the new version of the Territorial Agenda 2030 should then be adopted by the responsible European ministers, providing a new action-oriented framework for the future.

Cohesion appears to be an issue of an explosive nature that is more important than ever before

these days in Germany, in Europe, and also further afield. I look forward with anticipation to the introductory lectures by Dr. Böhme, who will familiarise us with the structure and content of the Territorial Agenda, followed by ESPON, the European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion, which will give us a visual representation of its research and, based on its wealth of data, the territorial state in Europe. Following this, Professor Davoudi will deliver a scientific lecture, explaining how the Territorial Agenda is linked to the issue of a just Europe, an aspect that I consider particularly exciting in this form. The subsequent panel discussion will be equally interesting. The debate will primarily revolve around the question of how new impetus for a more just and greener Europe can be developed at the different planning levels. After the lunch break, we will hold two parallel workshops, one of which will address the international

perspective on the Territorial Agenda. Other member states have very different priorities and planning cultures in this respect. And we will have a look at the perspectives of state and regional planning/ development in Germany on the Territorial Agenda 2030, i.e. in practical terms. Finally, we have the honour of listening to a statement by Minister for Europe of Lower Saxony, Birgit Honé, who is also a member of the European Committee of the Regions. The Committee of the Regions, one of the active stakeholders in this process, made an early contribution to the debate by issuing its own opinion last autumn.

Ladies and gentlemen, as you can see, we can look forward to a distinguished and varied event, so I shall now hand over to Professor Baumgart, President of the ARL – Academy for Territorial Development in the Leibniz Association.

Professor Dr.-Ing. Sabine Baumgart  
President of the ARL - Academy for Territorial Development in the Leibniz Association



Figure 2: Professor Dr.-Ing. Sabine Baumgart (Photo: ARL)

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today we are discussing the Territorial Agenda 2030. It is the third agenda, following on from 2007 and 2011, that is now on the way to be published and will hopefully also be implemented. What we want – or what the Agenda seeks to achieve – is to provide impetus for a greener, more just Europe at different planning levels in the face of transnational problems. As already mentioned by Mr. Meltzian, we are all experiencing the global, economic and technological linkages that change and affect the organisation of life, climate change and labour migration, i.e. issues that are all transnational. In particular COVID-19, as you all know, but also issues such as Wirecard or Amazon, corporations that pay too little tax – or none at all. These are all issues that we must address transnationally. In cases like these, borders no longer really play a role, or so we thought. But then – in light of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic – national territories suddenly reemerge. Demarcations are established, borders are closed,

and living space, regional life contexts are temporarily interrupted. And all at once, the action area reverts to a container area. This demonstrates yet again the importance of finding ways of progressing from crisis management to proactive planning, as formulated in the two core objectives of the Territorial Agenda: a just and a green Europe.

The task of coordinated spatial development must act within different policy frameworks at the European level, particularly in the face of the greatest current challenge of political centrifugal forces, and must open up, or seek, its scope for exerting influence on spatial development. And at the same time, we must face the fact that we have very different planning cultures in Europe. Cohesion policy must learn to deal with this, at least that is our aspiration.

Justice – we could spend a long time discussing this topic alone: What kind of justice are we talking about? Spatial justice, the distribution of resources,



access to resources, environmental justice, procedural fairness ... The concept addresses a great many dimensions. It is important, however, also to me as an urban planner, that spatial development actors get involved at various spatial scales, also directly on the ground. They must become active at all levels and organise new functions in metropolitan and peripheral areas alike. Consequently, account must also be taken of the concurrence of events with different time scales of development – if we think of gradual climate change on the one hand, and on the other, the sudden onset of the pandemic that is affecting all our lives, with its immediate and short-term, massive health effects and, in many cases, also very harsh economic effects. These current social,

spatially relevant challenges are transnational phenomena that call for multi-level and cross-actor approaches, and that are an important issue here, especially with sectoral policies in mind.

We hope that today's event will produce a gain in knowledge, possibly with recommendations evolving from the discussions that will then be included in the further processes for coordinating the Territorial Agenda 2030, especially with a view to their implementation.

In the context of the increased internationalisation efforts within the ARL - Academy for Territorial Development in the Leibniz Association since this year, it is a particular pleasure for us to organise this important event.

# Territorial Agenda 2030: A future for all places

Dr. Kai Böhme & Christian Lüer (Spatial Foresight)

After almost two years of preparation and discussion, involving various players in all EU member states and neighbouring countries such as Switzerland and Norway, the ministers responsible for spatial planning, territorial development and territorial cohesion will agree on the Territorial Agenda 2030 at their virtual meeting on 1 December 2020. The Agenda is the outcome of many discussions with the European Commission, the European Parliament, the European Committee of the Regions, the European Economic and Social Committee, the European Investment Bank Group, relevant European and national associations and various other players.

The new Territorial Agenda builds on the Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020 (agreed in 2011). The basic objectives of its predecessor – strategic orientation for territorial development and the integration of the territorial dimension and territorial cohesion principles in policy making and implementation – are still valid. In fact, they are even more important today than in 2011. However, the formulation of the challenges and priorities are somewhat dated and would benefit from more contemporary and more emphatic formulations. For instance, momentum surrounding the debates about „places that don't matter“, the „geography of discontent“, climate change, spatial interdependencies, and the quality of government and governance has considerably increased since 2011. Still, there is the need to emphasise the

territorial dimension of these debates, and to demonstrate how different types of territories can contribute to ensuring that such challenges are addressed appropriately.

In short, there is widespread agreement that unsustainable developments as well as growing inequalities among places and among people have reached a critical level in Europe. These tensions risk driving people and places apart – in Europe, its countries, its regions and its municipalities – and they risk undermining the development potential for future generations.

## **A future for all places**

The overall aim of the Territorial Agenda 2030 is a sustainable future for all places and people in Europe. This overall aim is specified through two objectives, namely a „just Europe“, which will offer a hopeful future for all places and people, and a „green Europe“, which will protect our common livelihood and will shape a societal transition. These two objectives are further broken down into six priorities which reinforce the importance of working towards a „just Europe“ and a „green Europe“ at various geographical scales (European, functional regional, crossborder, etc.) and within various sectoral policies (spatial planning, environment, climate, economy, social affairs, transport, etc.).

The table below provides an overview of the six priorities and what exactly the ministers agree upon in the Territorial Agenda 2030.

<b>A JUST EUROPE</b> that offers future perspectives for all places and people	<b>A GREEN EUROPE</b> that protects common livelihoods and shapes societal transition
<p><b>BALANCED EUROPE: Better balanced territorial development utilising Europe's diversity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will take action to encourage neighbourhoods, communities, municipalities, counties, regions and Member States to cooperate on response to global societal challenges and improving working, living and business conditions in all places as well as strengthening socio-economic prosperity, innovation capacity, positions in global value chains and global competitiveness across Europe.</li> <li>• We invite policy makers from all levels to promote polycentric development models that offer a role for all places.</li> <li>• We will take action to encourage decision makers at all governance levels to unleash the unique potential of territories with specific geographies and adequately address the constraints of these areas through integrated and cooperative approaches.</li> </ul>	<p><b>HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT: Better ecological livelihoods, climate-neutral and resilient towns, cities and regions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We support the development of nature-based solutions as well as green and blue infrastructure networks that link ecosystems and protected areas in spatial planning, land management and other policies, and the development of new crisis management tools to increase places' safety and resilience.</li> <li>• We will respect the natural limits of Europe's common livelihoods and increase the resilience of all places impacted by climate change.</li> <li>• We will concentrate on strengthening awareness and empowering local and regional communities to protect, rehabilitate, utilise and reutilise their (built) environments, landscapes, material and immaterial cultural assets and other unique values through instruments of EU Cohesion Policy, Rural Development Policy, spatial planning or any other tools enhancing integrated territorial or local development among others.</li> </ul>
<p><b>FUNCTIONAL REGIONS: Convergent local and regional development, less inequality between places</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will search for dialogue with decision-makers in cities and towns of all sizes to apply an integrated multilevel governance approach. This means involving people from different governance levels, in particular local and regional ones, as well as diverse policy sectors and societal groups.</li> <li>• We will engage with local and regional decision makers to strengthen cooperation on long-term place-based strategies for these areas and address sustainable functional links between neighbouring areas.</li> </ul>	<p><b>CIRCULAR ECONOMY: Strong and sustainable local economies in a globalised world</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We support Europe's transition to a circular economy and the development of place-based industrial symbiosis processes, also taking into account the need for sustainable soil and land use.</li> <li>• We support the development of local and regional circular economy strategies linking local and global economies.</li> <li>• We encourage the strengthening of innovation capacities in all regions, including local strategies for energy transition and measures in the building, transport and bioeconomy sectors.</li> </ul>

## INTEGRATION BEYOND BORDERS: Easier living and working across national borders

- We will take action to embed stable cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation in macro-regional, national, regional and local development strategies. We also support the development of new strategic documents, where needed, and the promotion of co-development, involving citizens across borders.
- We will intensify the dialogue with policy makers at all governance levels to coordinate national sector policies between countries and to diminish existing obstacles to cooperation.

## SUSTAINABLE CONNECTIONS: Sustainable digital and physical connectivity of places

- We will invite stakeholders to enter into a dialogue on the need for adequate access to high-speed fixed and mobile communication networks in all places, and the need for a digital infrastructure with a low carbon footprint and low impact on human health.
- We will further improve links between regional planning and the development of Trans-European Networks (TEN), especially along core network corridors. Linking all places with major transport nodes supports international trade connections and local development opportunities.
- We invite spatial and transport planners to explore new socially and environmentally progressive models for local and regional mobility-as-a-service and to cooperate on multimodal and environmentally friendly accessibility of and within urban centres.

### From vision to action

Implementation and application were the weak points of previous Territorial Agendas (2011 and 2004) and the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP in 1999). The Territorial Agenda 2030 tries to take a step forward – albeit within the contextual limits of European intergovernmental cooperation.

European intergovernmental cooperation means that EU member states and non-EU countries, such as Switzerland, Norway and Iceland, as well as a variety of EU bodies and other players, have all been actively involved in the making of the Territorial Agenda 2030. It also means that the Territorial Agenda 2030 does not have any financial means or regulatory powers of its own. It relies on voluntary commitment and action.

To provide strategic orientation for the implementation process, the Territorial Agenda 2030 addresses explicitly how key players can contribute in the context of their regular mandate. These include member states, subnational agencies and governments, the European Commission, the European Parliament, the European Committee of the Regions, the European Economic and Social

Committee, and the European Investment Bank Group, as well as European and national associations working with spatial development and/or representing local and regional governments.

Together with the Territorial Agenda 2030, the ministers will also launch six pilot actions to demonstrate, test and develop practices that contribute to achieving the Territorial Agenda 2030 priorities.

- A future for lagging regions
- Understanding how sectoral policies shape spatial (im)balances
- Small places matter for territorial development
- Alpine towns for citizens
- Climate change adaptation and resilience through landscape transition
- Territorial vision for a cross-border functional region

Everybody is encouraged to closely follow these actions, get inspired and offer proposals for new actions. More information on the Territorial Agenda 2030 and its first generation of pilot actions is available at [www.territorialagenda.eu](http://www.territorialagenda.eu)

# Territorial Agenda 2030 and „A Just Europe“

Professor Simin Davoudi  
Global Urban Research Unit (GURU), Newcastle University



Figure 3: Simin Davoudi (Photo: Simon Veit-Wilson)

When the World Health Organisation declared the Covid-19 pandemic, it added that „we’re in this together“ (WHO, 2020). Last time we heard this was after the 2008 financial crisis. It is a trope that evokes different emotions and serves different purposes. On the one hand, it is an expression of solidarity and a call for cooperation. On the other hand, it is an invocation of the parity of sufferings and sacrifices. In the context of the pandemic, it was used to suggest that the virus does not discriminate and can affect porters and cleaners, as well as princes and prime ministers. However, the social and spatial impacts of the pandemic are profoundly unequal. Unlike the virus itself, which is unknown, its uneven impacts are neither new nor unexpected. They mirror the inequalities that have been on the rise since 2008 (Davoudi and Ormerod, 2020).

Barack Obama once said that „inequality is the defining issue of our time“ (quoted in Financial Times, 2013). That was 2013. Today, high levels of inequalities across the world are nothing short of calamitous. Nearly half the world’s population live on less than 6 dollars a day, while the wealth of billionaires is growing by 2.5 billion dollars a day (Oxfam Report, 2019: 11). Even in Europe, which is the least unequal region of the world, between 1980 and 2017 the top 1% of Europeans captured 17% more of Europe-wide growth while the bottom 50% captured 15% (Blanchet et al., 2019).

Throughout austerity, when we were supposed to be in it together, the rich were getting richer, and the inequality gaps were getting wider (The Economist, 2016). This is more pronounced when we look inside some member states. For example, in the United Kingdom (UK), income inequality is the sixth largest in OECD countries and is growing. Wealth inequality is even higher, with the top 10 % owning 47 % of all net wealth (Keely, 2015; OECD, 2015). This is an alarming trend because rising inequalities are bad for everyone; the rich and the poor alike. As Wilkinson and Pickett (2010) have shown, social and health problems are significantly worse in more unequal, rich countries. High levels of inequality hinder social mobility, jeopardise long term prosperity, and undermine political stability. So, inequality is bad for democracy too, because it leads to people’s distrust of democratic politics and institutions at all levels (EU White Paper, 2017:12). A growing sense of injustice creates a vacuum that is often filled by populist rhetoric, the kind of rhetoric that is driving Europe apart. For example, 76 % of UKIP voters thought that ordinary people do not get their fair share of the country’s wealth (British Social Attitude Survey, 2015). The rise of populism can be seen as the revenge of the „losers of globalisation“, referring to those who have suffered most from job losses, depressed wages, precarious lives and a sense of insecurity. Those who feel that the benefits of economic growth are not available to them.

There are also spatial dimensions of inequalities. As the Seventh Cohesion Report of the European Commission (EC, 2017:4) shows, „in the crisis years (2008- 2014), ... regional disparities widened“. It is these spatial inequalities that territorial cohesion has tried to address, albeit with mixed and limited success. The fact that some of its main beneficiaries also vote for Eurosceptic parties demands serious reflection to explore what has gone wrong. I would argue that the answer lies largely in the change in the values upon which territorial cohesion was initially grounded, and the rationalities

which guided its approach to spatial inequalities (Davoudi, 2019).

Although the term territorial cohesion entered the Commission's lexicon in the 1990s and became its official goal in the 2000s, the values driving it have a longer history, going back to the egalitarian ideals of the post-war welfare states or what is commonly known as European social models. Despite their differences, these models put the emphasis on equality, solidarity, cohesion and cooperation (Davoudi, 2007). The post-war consensus was based on the idea that social protection, public investment and state intervention in free markets are crucial for reducing social and spatial inequalities. Emphasis was put on directing development opportunities through public funding and private investments to economically disadvantaged regions (ibid). Achieving „harmonious development“ and „reducing the differences between the regions“ were key objectives of the Treaty of Rome (1957: Article 2). Similar goals underpinned the regional policies of the 1970s, which aimed to „improve the harmony of regional structures in the Community“ (CEC, 1969). It was precisely because of the pursuit of these social democratic values that post-war Europe became less unequal in the second part of the 20th century (Alvaredo et al., 2018). I have suggested elsewhere (Davoudi, 2005) that territorial cohesion was the spatial manifestation of European social models, as it is also reflected in the following statement in the Third Cohesion Report (EC, 2004: 27):

„The concept of territorial cohesion extends beyond the notion of economic and social cohesion by both adding to this and reinforcing it. In policy terms, the objective is to help achieve a more balanced development by reducing existing disparities ....“

The introduction of a territorial strategy into the EU policy discourse is an acknowledgment that spaces and places matter and that people's life chances and opportunities are significantly influenced by the places where they live and work. Territorial cohesion extended the principle of solidarity among European citizens to solidarity among European territories. It was introduced to

counteract the negative effects of globalisation which in Europe were compounded by the Single European Market (1986) and the Economic and Monetary Union (1991). As the ESDP (1999) anticipated, the impacts of EU economic integration were not the same everywhere. Hence, the aim of the territorial cohesion agenda was to reduce the widening of spatial inequalities in European regions. However, the political landscape of the 1990s into which territorial cohesion was introduced was not the same as that of the post-war welfare states. Europe was already moving away from the social democratic ideals that underpinned its initial regional policy, and gradually embracing neoliberal values with greater emphasis being put on efficiency, economic competitiveness, entrepreneurial governance, aggregate growth and regions for themselves (Davoudi, 2019). Even in countries such as Denmark traditional egalitarian values were being dismissed as outdated political goals (see Davoudi et al., 2019). Just before the Lisbon Summit, in a speech at the World Economic Forum, Tony Blair, the former British prime minister, criticised European social models as outdated and urged the EU leaders „to make a definitive stand in favour of market reform“ (quoted in *The Economist*, 2000:17). The tensions between the social market model and the liberal market model became more visible during the referendum on the EU Constitution when some voters considered the Constitution to be ultra-liberal and a threat to European social models.

According to neoliberal rationality, inequalities can be tackled by relying on the „invisible hand of the market“ and limiting government interventions. For Fredrick Hayek, one of its key intellectual architects and advisor to Mrs. Thatcher, the self-organising dynamics of the markets provided the ideal solution for reducing disparities. He called it the theory of spontaneous order (Hayek, 1969). Interestingly he was also in favour of European federalism, but contrary to Altiero Spinelli's vision of a socially cohesive Europe, Hayek saw Europe as an enlarged economic space, free from government interventions and supranational regulations.

Thus, by the time the first Territorial Agenda (2007) appeared on the scene, European politics had

already moved from cohesion-oriented to competitiveness-oriented rationalities. According to this new direction, the best way to reduce spatial inequalities was to concentrate investment in places that can generate high returns. The assumption is that growth in these areas will eventually trickle down and reach others. This rationality dismisses fairness as a value, considers any intervention in agglomeration forces as a waste of resources, and suggests that the best we can do is to let the growing areas grow further until market dynamics correct the resulting imbalances (see an example of this rationality in *The Economist*, 2013).

This agglomeration-centric approach is complemented with a neo-classical economic view on inequality which asks why, if the ultimate goal is to improve the welfare of individuals, should governments spend money on places that do not matter? Why not encourage people to move to those places where opportunities are? An absurd version of this view was expressed by an academic, Tim Leuing, who told a conference full of Liverpoolians that „Liverpool’s time is past” and its population should move to the south-east of England (*Liverpool Echo*, 2013). He told them that the city they called home and to which they had cultural and community ties had no future or prospect in a globalised world of fierce competition; and not much could be done about it. He was wrong, because various election results across Europe have left no doubt that contrary to these spatially blind prescriptions, places do matter and ignoring the spatiality of injustices leads to geographies of discontent and emboldens populist backlash. As Andres Rodrigues-Pose (2018) put it, it leads to „the revenge of the places that don’t matter”.

The neo-liberalisation of cohesion policies and their over-emphasis on agglomeration and economic competitiveness have kept many places behind. I use the term kept behind, instead of left behind, to make it explicit that spatial inequalities are not the result of some kinds of self-afflicted harm, but rather the outcome of structural changes, misguided policies and winner-takes-all approaches. For example, those regions that were hit hardest by the 2008 financial crisis saw the

largest reductions in their public expenditure, leading to the widening of disparities, as is admitted by even the cautious language of the Seventh Cohesion Report (EC, 2017: xix):

„In a number of Member States, the reduction in growth-friendly [public] expenditure has been substantial. Since most of these Members States have a GDP per head below the EU average, the reduction could put at risk disparities across the EU narrowing in the future.”

In the UK, austerity was a political choice, not an economic necessity. It was used to radically restructure the welfare system and the delivery of public services (Davoudi et al. in press). As a result, between 2012 and 2018, while the UK economy grew by 5 %, public spending for low income households dropped by 44 % (HRW, 2019, 14). Regions, such as the north-east of England, that were hit hardest by the crisis, saw the largest cuts to their budgets and are likely to be the worst off as we emerge out of the pandemic. That is why I suggested at the beginning of this paper that the Covid-19 crisis has revealed social and spatial inequalities, laying them bare. Its unequal effects represent „the wreckage of a train that’s been careening down the track for years” (Roy, 2020, no page).

Within this context, I welcome the publication of the new draft Territorial Agenda 2030 (2020) and its renewed emphasis on the need to tackle spatial inequalities. More importantly, I welcome the framing of the Agenda around the notion of „A just Europe”, along with a sustainable or green Europe. But a closer look suggests that the Agenda does not seem to have moved from a mere empirical observation of inequalities towards indicating a moral position on justice (Bell and Davoudi, 2016). This distinction is important because without a clear and explicit expression of the values that underpin its priorities, this Territorial Agenda risks following its predecessors’ limited leverage on cohesion policy and its approach to tackling spatial inequalities.

Amartya Sen, a Nobel laureate, suggests that in judging a society as just or unjust, we need to focus

not only on who gets what, but also what people can do with what they get (Sen, 2009: 233). This idea of justice focuses on capability, i.e. people's ability to function in the life they choose for themselves, and that includes the places they choose to live in. His theory of justice resonates with how territorial cohesion was initially justified as an EU policy. This justification was clearly articulated by the Third Cohesion Report which suggested that, „people should not be disadvantaged by wherever they happen to live or work in the Union“ (EC, 2004:27). Sen's idea shifts the question of justice away from a focus on the distribution of resources per se, towards different people's and places' abilities to convert them into capabilities. It shifts the focus from formal or legal opportunities to substantive opportunities (Davoudi and Brooks, 2014).

His idea may help us better understand what has gone wrong with the cohesion policy. Although its redistribution of resources, or transfer of cash, has been necessary, it has not been enough to achieve a „just Europe“. For that, more emphasis should be put on enhancing people's and places' abilities to convert these resources into capability, so that they can function in the life they choose for themselves and in the place they happen to live and work in. In practical terms, it means replacing the top-down, formula-based transfer of cohesion funds, which sometimes are spent on underused and unwanted infrastructure projects, with tailor-made, place-specific measures that are designed from the ground up.

A large and commendable package of funding has been offered by the Commission for recovery from the Covid-19 crisis. Going forward, the critical question is whether these resources will be used to bring Europe back to where it was, or to take it forward to a better, more just Europe.

### Acknowledgment

This essay is the transcript of my keynote speech at the Discussion Forum on Spatial Development on 3 September 2020 in Hannover in which I drew freely on my own previous work so it may not include full citations of those works.

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# Panel discussion:

„How could the European spatial development policy for a more just and greener Europe be given new impetus on the various planning levels?“

Contributors:

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- Dr. Daniel Meltzian, Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community
- Hildegard Zeck, Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection of Lower Saxony
- Mag. Markus Seidl, Austrian Conference on Spatial Planning (ÖROK)

## Panel contribution by Professor Dr. Tobias Chilla

Friedrich-Alexander University Erlangen-Nürnberg  
Institute of Geography



Figure 4: Professor Dr. Tobias Chilla (Photo: Tobias Chilla)

The process around the update of the Territorial Agenda – once again – poses the question about the relationship between European strategy documents on spatial development and the other levels. This is clearly a complex relationship, which causes a very multifaceted discussion (see, for instance, the overview by Purkarthofer 2016). At this point I would like to present just three arguments on the current situation.

Firstly, I would like to emphasise how important it seems to me that the relevance of the spatial dimension of the European integration process should again be made more visible in the political process.

The debate about the pan-European documents of spatial development (Territorial State, ESDP, TA, Green Paper etc.) is prominent in the epistemic community but this does not allow us to conclude that they have any practical relevance in spatial development. There is still a disparity between political regulations and functional developments which have a great spatial impact, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, minimal systematic political action on just this level. The accusation of spatial blindness levelled towards European (regional) policy, as prominently formulated in the Barca Report, may be hard, but it addresses a core problem of the current day. In recent years, discussions around this policy field have lacked intensity – and the Territorial Agenda 2030 provides a really important boost here.

Secondly, I would like, in principle, to agree with the contents of the draft. It is right and important that the structure and argumentation of the Territorial Agenda 2030 should be given a „modernisation impetus“ here. The challenges and terminology have changed so much in the last decade that it is undoubtedly time for this. For example, the revaluation of the border areas is most welcome as is the stronger focus on climate change. The references made to the current pertinent policy

documents from the higher level (Green Deal etc.) are essential. I consider the positioning of the economy as a subcategory of „greenings“ more critically – despite agreeing completely with the arguments in the text itself. In the light of the current challenges to and manipulation of the global economy by geopolitically motivated stakeholders, the European region must play a role that goes beyond greening. The arguments presented in the perspective „Europe in the world“ could be developed more strongly and the relevance of spatial development be further emphasised (I believe ESPON/Claude Grasland 2007 is still inspiring in this context).

Thirdly, the implementation dimension requires consideration. The TA 2030 process uses pilot projects as promising approaches that can break down the abstractness of such a strategy document, gathering new experiences which then have repercussions on the European TA process. In the wake of the sobering experience with the previous Action Plan for the Territorial Agenda it is understandable that this instrument should be abandoned. The „hands-on“ approach of pilot projects is undoubtedly correct in this context. However, it cannot replace medium and long-term perspectives and concrete options. This is even more important as the TA is a document of territorial governance, as explicitly and repeatedly emphasised in the current draft. The academic discussion around the topic of governance has come to the clear conclusion that governance is successful and effective when it is „in the shadow of government“, that has clear links to a formal and hierarchically established policy. There is no link of this sort to date, and to me this is still a gap.

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### Panel contribution by Dr. Daniel Meltzian

Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community, Head of Division „European Spatial Development Policy; Territorial Cohesion“



Figure 5: Dr. Daniel Meltzian (Photo: ARL)

First of all, I must say that I found Professor Davoudi's lecture very inspiring and I would like to attempt to contradict by saying that everything remains the same. Representing the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community, I would build on the aspect of a just Europe and also on the first priority of a balanced Europe and say that, in my opinion, it has a different emphasis. These are issues that are discussed here in Germany under the heading of equivalent living conditions. This is an aspect that, for a long time, has been an essential part of the Federal Spatial Planning Act, but which in my opinion has received a totally new meaning, particularly by Federal Minister Seehofer, who prominently pushed it forward during the coalition negotiations for the present Federal Government. It covers a longer section in the coalition agreement, compared to the large number of topics that can usually only embrace one line each. And this new priority has resulted in the addition of a Community division to the Federal Ministry of the Interior with three subdivisions: Social Cohesion, Equivalent Living Conditions and Spatial Development and Policy. In my opinion, putting equivalent living conditions on the political agenda was an important point, and the right one.

If we look now at national spatial development, in 2016 we last revised the Concepts and Strategies for Spatial Development in Germany, where equivalent living conditions are treated in concept one „Enhance competitiveness“ and, partly, in concept

two „Ensure the provision of public services“. But I would like to provocatively state, with deliberation, that competitiveness comes first, intellectually, followed by the provision of public services. In the context of competitiveness, attention is given to how public services can be ensured.

As I said, this statement is slightly provocative, and I believe at the European level, as just fascinatingly presented by Professor Davoudi, there were „Aha! moments“ with Brexit in 2016 and Trump’s election, then the debate on the „places left behind“, the „geography of discontent“ etc. started. And Professor Davoudi developed the idea further and showed how it continued into the recent past, up to this summer, when we saw that the European Council took four days and nights to wrestle with what the next multiannual financial framework should look like. They managed to agree, for the first time, to change the funding structure, agreeing that contributions should be given by the „strong“ to the „weak“. After all, there was ultimately a realisation that, not least because of Covid-19 and renewed divergence due to the financial consequences, that we reached a point where, if we were not careful, Europe would drift so far apart that this would be problematical for the further pan-European development.

For this reason, I would say that with the generic term „A future for all places“ – everybody should have a positive perspective for the future - this idea has already been incorporated in the Territorial Agenda 2030. But is it already present in Germany, such as in the Concepts for Spatial Development? This would now be a point where I would say, once the Territorial Agenda 2030 has been adopted, it would be an aspect that could be taken up and discussed in the bodies of the Standing Conference of Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning (MKRO): Is it possible that we also have to adapt our Concepts in Germany?

I also share the opinion, as just mentioned by Professor Chilla, that governance is the crucial point. He described it wonderfully: intergovernmental cooperation is fragile, but always depends on the resources available to each presidency. We make a fresh attempt to do better

than with the last Territorial Agenda. Regarding the question as to why there is no action plan this time: ultimately, it did not work last time. As Dr. Böhme already intimated, our analysis gave us the impression that it doesn’t work if you are too rigid, if you take an over-centralised approach stating that „the next presidency will do this and the presidency after that will do this and that“. It is difficult if there is no inner, intrinsic motivation. Hence our approach is to be flexible at first, providing a lower threshold. As far as I can tell, it has worked well so far. We start with the designated six pilot actions, which turned out to be more than originally planned. It goes without saying that we additionally seek to gather resources in order to perpetuate the process.

#### Panel contribution by Hildegard Zeck

Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection of Lower Saxony  
Head of Division 3 – Spatial Planning, Rural Development, Promotion



Figure 6: Hildegard Zeck (Photo: ARL)

From the perspective of the state of Lower Saxony, the crucial question is not „Does the Territorial Agenda bring us something new?“ but rather „Does it fit with the concerns that we have in Lower Saxony and throughout Germany and Europe?“ and: „Can we set an example in the way in which we deal with the TA 2030?“ It is important that the TA 2030 can unfold the effects expected of it throughout Europe. I think that in Germany we can implement a just and green Europe for all people and places more easily than elsewhere, because we already pursue the goal of achieving equivalent living conditions in all parts of the country.

The TA 2030 makes equivalence and sustainability the priorities in spatial development. This alters the balance. It is necessary to focus more strongly on there being no losers as a result of development. The TA 2030 thus helps to promote equivalence as the focus of spatial and sectoral policies in the European Commission and in European politics. The TA 2030 now confronts the strong emphasis on competition with a new focus and forces a critical consideration of the regional growth and competition strategies that have often been at the top of the agenda.

The TA 2030 reflects the concerns that we in Lower Saxony have, which encourages consideration of its priorities.

These priorities include much of what we also view as coming under the heading of equivalence, which is currently insufficiently considered in the political priorities of funding policies and sectoral policies. Thus we should not only consider equivalence in our continuing discussions in the Commission for Equivalent Living Conditions (Kommission Gleichwertigkeit) in Germany. Rather, it is also important to identify where the losers are whenever decisions are made – not only the losers who already exist but also the new ones in case of doubt.

The TA 2030 brings together the diversity of „places“ and the variety of development perspectives. The TA 2030 focuses on the commitment of regions and places to planning and initiating measures, and addresses all levels including the local/small-scale. It relies on cooperation! Often the options for action are limited by a lack of land, measures and finance and a lack of binding and rigorous institutionalised planning, authorisation and prohibition. Transparency and participation on all levels help here to identify the options which remain available to the relevant stakeholders, to pinpoint which forms of support are suitable and may be successful for them and their locations.

Regions that we in the past would never have seen as possible losers are missing out on many developments. We must be much more vigilant here and investigate where this can be countered and how it can be compensated. In Germany we are

familiar with compensation in the form of the municipal fiscal equalisation system and other subsidy options. Thus, for instance, as part of the „Joint Task for the Improvement of Agricultural Structures and Coastal Protection“, financially weak municipalities were provided with additional finance for rural development. It is clear that we cannot hope that funding will be enough to eradicate inequalities, which often result from physical conditions. Equally, regions which always had a different structure must be enabled to pursue their own paths.

Another important point is thus to empower those on the lower level who should actually decide what happens and how it happens. It must be made possible that many more decisions are made independently on this level, using advice and mentoring which need not always be expensive. This can be clearly seen in the funding programmes for rural development where numerous, small measures can lead to the redevelopment of villages, allowing village communities to gain new self-confidence and to draw up goals for themselves. I have sometimes observed this from above and smiled at the tiny amounts of the money going there, thinking of them as peanuts. But, among other things, support, solidarity and acknowledgement motivate people to take their fate in their own hands and to look for help where it is needed.

The TA 2030 forces us to critically reflect on spatial development policy and also demands critical consideration of existing and previous strategies and funding approaches to urban and regional development. In this context, the Territorial Agenda 2030 is almost a little too late. I see it as an umbrella for the New Leipzig Charter, which in turn addresses the issue of what developments we want in the cities and how the cities should be enabled to pursue processes of transformation. And I see it as an umbrella for the process initiated by the EU Commission intended to develop a „2040 long-term vision for rural areas“. These three fields must be linked together, they should not remain individual visions.

In the administrations work is well underway on a joint national strategy plan for the new agricultural policy and rural development for the new funding period, which was intended to start in 2021. However, as the EU budget has been delayed we now have the opportunity of integrating the aims of the Agenda and perhaps even of reserving funding that can then later be directed towards promoting more equivalent living conditions and sustainability.

### Panel contribution by Mag. Markus Seidl

Director of the Austrian Conference on Spatial Planning (ÖROK)



Figure 7: Markus Seidl (Photo: ARL)

For the grand challenges that lie ahead, Europe needs a common understanding of its territorial dimensions and of how the various actors at the different spatial levels will go about approaching these challenges.

In view of this, the agreement on a „Territorial Agenda 2030“ is a necessary and important step in the further development of previous activities, which began around three decades ago in the form of the European Spatial Development Perspective!

Besides the necessary impact of the Territorial Agenda on European policies and the development thereof, the significance of the Territorial Agenda also lies in the inspiration of relevant national and regional planning processes. Seen from a national planning perspective, it can provide at least two key stimuli:

1. The Territorial Agenda offers the possibility, or even the necessity, to take a structured approach to addressing European spatial development in the course of the different national planning processes. In this connection, it provides a guidance framework for determining one's corresponding position in relation to central issues of European spatial development and for identifying the contributions that could be made.
2. Given its profound specialist grounding, a document like the Territorial Agenda also always reflects the current state of the specialist debate; this alone enables it to generate relevance, developing an important reference for national planning processes through such agenda setting. With regard to the Austrian Spatial Development Concept (ÖREK) 2030, currently being drawn up, the concept of „just spatial development“, the strong emphasis on functional spatial relationships or the significance of the fleshing out of spatial governance processes are examples of topics that, at the very least, enrich or influence the national debate.

The aspiration to initiate an appropriate implementation process by adopting the Territorial Agenda is exciting and at the same time challenging. As was the case with our national ÖREK, the Territorial Agenda also raises the question of the extent to which such a „soft control mechanism“ can be implemented at all or whether we must instead manage to apply central concepts from it; by „apply“ I mean asserting influence in the direction of achieving central conceptual basic principles. In any case, this means that they must be translated or fleshed out in the context of each area of application and of the relevant national or regional situations.

Regardless of this differentiation, which is not only of a semantic nature, the challenge continues to be to demonstrate the added value of multisectoral and multilevel cooperation to actors of more sectorally oriented policies. To achieve this, we in

Austria have developed the „ÖREK partnerships“ approach. The aim of this approach is to enable actors to learn and experience together the added value of being involved in these processes, ensuring that they have ownership of the collaboratively developed results and responses.

In the process, the main factors of success turned

out to be appropriate accompanying support structures, support through the provision of the necessary resources, and efforts towards the often cited „added value“ of a multisectoral and multilevel approach.

In this respect, the joint vision – in this case in the form of the Territorial Agenda – is the common reference and a source of new initiatives!



Figure 8: The auditorium on site (Photo: ARL)

# International perspectives on the TA 2030 from European states

## Contributors:

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- Elisa Vilares, Ministry for the Environment and Climate Action Portugal
- Sverker Lindblad, Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation Sweden
- Professor Maros Finka, Slovak University of Technology
- Alexandros Karvounis, European Investment Bank



Figure 9: The session contributors online (Photo: ARL)



## „The Territorial Agenda 2030 priorities on functional regions and integration beyond borders as well as balanced territorial development is imperative for Luxembourg“

Dr. Thiemo W. Eser, Luxembourg  
Ministry of Energy and Spatial Planning  
Luxembourg

Europe is in a situation of high tensions, with strong territorial impacts: We see an increasing awareness about territorial inequalities, loss of identity, increasing mobility of people, which leads to territorial segregation, as also the mobility of jobs and money leads to increasing territorial imbalances.

In the future, a zero carbon economy will much more depend on territorial assets; now we see a strong territorial dimension of the COVID crises emerging. Logically one would expect that the attention of policy maker should focus on a placebased and territorially focused policy using the resources available in a multi-level governance system. However, the political focus in many countries concentrates on finding solutions for the territorial challenges primarily in national policy making and in sectoral policy measures.

The TA 2020 from 2011 is, and the new TA 2030 should be, an important tool to animate discussions about the importance of the territorial dimension at EU and national/regional level. This debate should help counterbalancing the just mentioned focus on national and sectoral priorities although most of the current policy challenges are territorially rooted. Territorial development is a task, which cuts across sectoral policies. The success and failure of a territorial development policy critically depends on the level, on which sectoral policies take their territorial impact dimension into account.

Policy-making is about taking political decisions. The TA 2030 has to demonstrate the territorial consequence of political decisions to sectoral policy makers. Therefore, the implementation of the TA 2030 needs evidence, demonstration projects and a close dialogue across sectors from the EU to the regional level. The key is to actively communicate to policy makers and to explain by concrete

examples and using available evidence, for example of ESPON, what the TA 2030 priorities mean in their concrete policy context and what they can do.

### **How important is the Territorial Agenda for national and local planning in Luxembourg?**

Working with the TA 2030 means in the national context to refer to the TA 2030 with concrete policy action. In Luxembourg the territorial development is strongly interwoven with the development of the Greater Region. Just to note: In the last 7 years Luxembourg's population grew by 20 % from 500.000 to 600.000 inhabitants. Furthermore, due to 200.000 daily commuters, Luxembourg during day time hosts about one third more people than during night time, and the commuting is not equally distributed within the country. Consequently, a reference to the TA 2030 priorities on functional regions and integration beyond borders as well as balanced territorial development is imperative for Luxembourg. In addition, strong efforts towards a circular economy need to be undertaken to achieve a zero-carbon economy.

In that context Luxembourg proposed a TA 2030 pilot action: the initiative taken by Luxembourg to develop a territorial vision and measures for a decarbonised und resilient cross-border functional region in 2050. The Ministry of Energy and Spatial Planning of Luxembourg works closely with stakeholders in Luxembourg and in the neighbouring countries of Belgium, France and Germany. The thematic focus on decarbonisation and resilience of this pilot action contributes to achieving the TA 2030 objectives, in particular to „integration beyond borders“ as well as „healthy environment“.

Furthermore, in Luxembourg the TA 2030 will be a useful reference document at national level for the on-going revision of the national planning guidelines, which already in their current version refer to the European Spatial Development Perspective.

To summarise, the success of the implementation of the TA 2030 will be strongly related to the ambitions of member state stakeholders to discuss

with sectoral policy makers at all levels by using territorial evidence relevant for their particular policy context. Territorial development policies such as the TA 2030 at the EU level require member states to use their „own“ policy resources to counteract any sectoral policy – for the cross-cutting nature of territorial development policy is eminent. This brings us back to the point about the necessity to convince other policy makers to take the territorial dimension into account.



#### Quotes: Dr. Thiemo W. Eser

„The TA 2030 has to demonstrate the territorial consequence of political decisions to sectoral policy makers. Therefore, the implementation of the TA 2030 needs evidence, demonstration projects and close dialogue across sectors from the EU to the regional level.“

„The key is to actively communicate to policy makers and to explain by concrete examples and using available evidence, for example of ESPON, what the TA 2030 priorities mean in their concrete policy context and what they can do.“

„Luxembourg proposed a TA 2030 pilot action: the initiative taken by Luxembourg to develop a territorial vision and measures for a decarbonised und resilient crossborder functional region in 2050.“

### „Integrated, inherently interministerial and multilevel: putting the Territorial Agenda 2030 into action.“

Elisa Vilares, Ministry for the Environment and Climate Action Portugal

Over these past few decades, Portugal has benefited from European funds to substantially invest in its physical infrastructure. While this has improved connectivity and shortened the distance between places, the Portuguese population has nevertheless gradually moved away from rural areas and the country’s interior to its coastal cities and metropolitan areas, or to other places in Europe and the rest of the world. Over three-quarters of the residential population, jobs, and added value is now concentrated along a narrow coastal strip of the mainland Portugal, while the rest of the country is left with an aged and rapidly dwindling population. Except for the month of August, when thousands of Portuguese migrants return for summer holidays to gather and celebrate with their families and friends, these vast inland areas poignantly illustrate „places left behind“.

A dichotomous narrative of a country divided between a vibrant urban coastline and a forgotten interior eventually emerged and gained great political traction. Mayors and the National Association of Portuguese Municipalities led widespread calls for more public investment, tax incentives and tax exemptions to make these places more attractive for businesses and families. For the current cohesion policy programming period (2016 - 2020), a map was drafted in 2015 of sparsely populated territories encompassing 164 out of the 278 municipalities in mainland Portugal, which was to be used to aid in managing European funds according to positive differentiation measures.

This abstract „interior“ also became a national political reality in 2015, when the Government created a task force for the „economic development of the interior“ directly accountable to the Prime Minister with the responsibility of creating, implementing and supervising the National Programme for Territorial Cohesion and promoting the development of the interior as a political priority. The task force was to work across ministerial boundaries. This programme was adopted in 2016, but revised and, in the context of

the revision of the National Spatial Planning Policy Programme in 2018 renamed into Programme for the Economic Development of the Interior. This was eventually approved by an act of parliament in 2019, which would set out the strategic options for territorial development in Portugal. In 2019, with a new government in office, territorial cohesion became a new, standalone ministry, with responsibilities for regional development and the economic development of the interior.

In June 2017, amidst an intense heat wave, the country witnessed the deadliest forest fire in its history: 66 people were killed and 254 injured in an area in central interior Portugal. During that hot and dry summer until autumn, the country continued to be devastated by widespread, intense and highly destructive forest fires. During these months, the abstract „interior“ became a concrete reality, as the national news opened with tragic stories on these places and the people living there throughout that summer. But it also became evident that the complex challenges facing these places in future – in particular a shrinking and ageing population and climate change – can only be tackled by abandoning the nostalgic and dichotomous narrative of the „interior“ and instead actually addressing these areas using integrated, inherently interministerial and multilevel approaches. At the same time, it seems indispensable to develop new coalitions and to experiment with innovative solutions to overcome these disturbing situations and, in doing so, to put the Territorial Agenda 2030 into action.



Quotes: Elisa Vilares

„In 2019 [...] territorial cohesion became a new, standalone ministry, with responsibilities for regional development and the economic development of the interior.“

„But it also became evident that the complex challenges facing these places in future – in particular a shrinking and ageing population and climate change – can only be tackled by abandoning the nostalgic and dichotomous narrative of the “interior” and instead actually addressing these areas using integrated, inherently interministerial and multilevel approaches. At the same time, it seems indispensable to develop new coalitions, and to experiment with innovative solutions to overcome these disturbing situations and, in doing so, to put the Territorial Agenda 2030 into action.“

**„In practice, the TA 2030 must take account of territorial specificities that should form the basis for development and strategy work at all levels.“**

Sverker Lindblad  
Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation Sweden

### **Importance of the Territorial Agenda in the Swedish context**

The real added value of the Territorial Agenda is the combination of cross-sectoral and place-based approaches, taking account of territorial/geographical functional contexts. This means that both sectoral and territorial needs and priorities are handled in an integrated way, thereby paving the way for tailor-made strategies.

In addition, the „green and just“ dimensions of TA 2030 highlight two of the most serious challenges of our time, firstly how to deal with climate change and the need for sustainable development, and secondly how to handle the socio-economic divide, not leaving any territory, region or population group behind.

In practice the TA 2030 must take account of territorial specificities that should form the basis for development and strategy work at all levels. Just to give two examples from the Swedish context. The Norrbotten region covers nearly 100.000 km<sup>2</sup> with 250.000 inhabitants, but with people living quite concentrated in a few spots. This is an area bigger than Hungary or Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg together. On the other hand, we have the Stockholm region which is less than 1/10 of that size, but with ten times more people in a functional region comprising 37 municipalities. Planning and development perspectives are very different in these two territories.

Having said all that, we can also identify some weak points. Planning for territorial cohesion is very complex. It is all about cooperation, in sectoral terms as well as between decision levels and on the cross-border scale, but must also be founded on a lot of evidence-based analytical knowledge. This is not an easy task, but more of that in the next section.

## Application, implementation & communication of the Territorial Agenda in Sweden

As I said earlier, territorial cohesion planning is a very complex task as it has to involve so many stakeholders who must cooperate and who also should be convinced that territories matter and are very different from one another. In this respect, I don't see the TA 2030 as a new fixed and ready planning concept to be applied separately in countries, regions and other territorial contexts. Instead it should be used as an inspiring tool in ongoing or scheduled development, planning or strategy action. Primarily, it should be presented and discussed in connection with such activities.

In my daily work with regional and rural development I struggle every day to explain to ministries and state agencies that Sweden is not a single spot on the map trying to convince them that their sectoral policies will be sharper if they put on territorial glasses and see the differences in challenges, assets and needs. When we arrange networks and dialogue meetings with these sectoral stakeholders, the TA 2030 will fit in perfectly to foster the territorial argumentation and perspective.

It might be easier to underpin this discussion at regional and local levels, but there is often a lack of cross-border and functional territorial perspectives. A specific challenge here is also the lack of capacity to deal with specific issues like climate change or digitalisation from a territorial perspective, as well as a lack of analytical and cooperative capacity. Also here the TA 2030 can be used as an inspiring tool in different dialogues.

In the Swedish context we also may have a specific challenge because we have no clear „spatial planning” tradition. Instead there is often a division between two planning disciplines; on the one hand, physical planning, which is mainly the responsibility of municipalities, and on the other hand, planning for regional development and growth, which occurs at regional level. The Territorial Agenda can be used to bring these two groups together.

Having said that, it must be emphasised that good dialogues and cooperation build on trust among partners, which requires sustained work and relations. It must also build on good analytical evidence and knowledge about territorial prerequisites, challenges and different options for development. In this respect I especially point out the use of maps as good tools in such discussions. Here I think we can use ESPON and other analytical territorial resources in more creative ways.



### Quotes: Sverker Lindblad

„Put on the territorial glasses to see the differences in challenges, assets and needs of all regions and places.”

„When we arrange networks and dialogue meetings with sectoral stakeholders, the TA 2030 will fit in perfectly to foster the territorial argumentation and perspective.”

„I especially point out the use of maps as good tools in such discussions. Here I think we can use ESPON and other analytical territorial resources in more creative ways.”

„The Territorial Agenda should be treated as inherent core part of European development and cohesion policies and not as an additional issue to social and economic coherence, as one of the sectoral policies“

Professor Maroš Finka  
Slovak University of Technology

### **Importance of the Territorial Agenda**

In the morning the speakers and previous panelists addressed many global as well as specific recent challenges Europe faces. Their common denominator is their complexity. This is true of both those categorised as global challenges like climate change, migration, demographic changes, Industry 4.0 transition or the coronavirus pandemic, and of more specific challenges like growing regional disparities, aging populations or the development of cross-border functional and economic structures including metropolitan regions such as the CENTROPE region with Vienna and Bratislava as the core cities.

All of these challenges require integrative crosssectoral approaches and many of them are negatively affected by the dominance of sectoral policies at the European level having an effect on national and subnational levels. This even concerns what are by nature cross-sectoral policies like the development of rural regions under the DG Agriculture and respective ministries of agriculture, although there are separate funding schemes for these areas. This is happening at a time when the development of rural areas has for a long time not been driven by development in the agricultural sector and the core topic in its development is a comprehensive approach to the protection of values and development, safeguarding equal access to quality of life including territorial integration within functional areas.

The territorial dimension is one of three crucial dimensions of integration jointly with temporal and thematic integration. This is because the Territorial Agenda framed by the territorial cohesion policy should not only be perceived but also be treated as an inherent and core part of European development and cohesion policies and not as an additional issue to social and economic coherence of the sectoral policies.

Looking at the current discussion on new EU instruments for post-Covid recovery I am not very optimistic that the EU politics is aware of the territorial dimension of the future recovery. Attention should be paid to the catalysing effects of the Covid pandemic on changes in European development processes and to the necessity to focus on the territorial dimension, speaking about competitiveness, the new economy, social, economic and environmental sustainability, and resilience.

I hope the German presidency will give impetus by moving away from a declarative politicising about the importance of the TA to a much more pragmatic approach to the TA and its implementation as a really integrative and integrating policy.

### **Implementation & communication of the Territorial Agenda**

In my opinion, there is only very limited awareness about the TA implications at both subnational and national levels, when looking beyond the spatial planning community, even speaking about issues closely linked to the TA like the Green Deal. There is a lack of communication on the TA as a set of relevant Agenda-framing sectoral policies, although the conceptual shift in the strategies for the new programming period of the EU 2021-2027 towards support for the comprehensive implementation of integrated territorial strategies and integrated territorial investments is clearly formulated as a policy priority.

How should we read the signals of real interest in TA implementation, when we follow the destruction of planning institutes which for years have been the flagships of TA implementation and were even responsible for the coordination of work on the TA update during the presidency in central European countries?

This is not only the instrument to improve problems concerning a lack of coordination and efficiency in the use of Structural Funds and to lower the negative effect of territorial disparities. In my opinion it represents a crucial turning point in building broader awareness of the importance of the Territorial Agenda.

This approach is crucial for the deformalisation of dealings within the territorial dimension of European development policies and for filling the knowledge gaps about its crucial role for safeguarding sustainability and efficiency in using resources to achieve equal access to quality of life.

The principles defined by the TA, although not declared as TA content due to the division of competences between ministries here in Slovakia, are the pillars for preparing the integrated territorial strategies for the regions and for sustainable urban development in Slovakia. They have to play a crucial role in improving the efficiency of using EU funds via intersectoral and horizontal, intercommunal and interregional coordination and synergies building on territory-based strategies and the integration of all relevant resources and capacities of multiple stakeholders. The precondition for being successful is the development of proper structures of multilevel polycentric government, which is one of the current challenges for us. The fuzzy character of the territories, not in geographical terms but in spatial planning interpretation, needs to be mirrored in these new structures.

As far as education is concerned, I would say that across all member schools of the Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP), the TA, directly and indirectly and in different forms, is included in the content of education. The problem is elsewhere: in the demand for professionals equipped with the ability to deal actively with the TA issues, which is driven by the continual pressure on planning schools, the reduction of the student numbers and the merging of subjects with other study fields. This is a problem which the AESOP needs to face jointly with the ECTP (The European Construction, built environment and energy efficient building Technology Platform) and ISOCARP (The international Society of City and Regional Planners), clearly communicating this problem to the European Commission.



#### Quotes: Professor Maroš Finka

„Looking at the current discussion on new EU instruments for the post-Covid recovery I am not very optimistic that the EU politics is aware about the territorial dimension of the future recovery.”

„How should we read the signals of real interest in TA implementation, when we follow the destruction of planning institutes which for years have been the flagships of TA implementation and were even responsible for the coordination of work on the TA update during the presidency in central European countries.”

„This approach is crucial for the deformalisation of dealings within the territorial dimension of European development policies and for filling the knowledge gaps about its crucial role for safeguarding sustainability and efficiency in using resources to achieve equal access to quality of life.”

## „An understanding of the link between investment and spatial inequalities is extremely important“

Alexandros Karvounis  
European Investment Bank

### **How important is the issue of spatial inequalities for the European Investment Bank (EIB) as a bank?**

The Territorial Agenda (TA) aims to reduce spatial inequalities and promote territorial cohesion. The mission of the European Investment Bank is to contribute to the policy objectives of the EU, as laid down in its statutes and the treaties, by financing sound investments. Article 309 of the treaty stresses that the bank should facilitate the financing of projects for developing less-developed regions. In other words, EIB cohesion projects seek to address also spatial inequalities by providing job and education opportunities, access to public infrastructure and services, a healthy and sustainable environment, as well as enabling a thriving economy across the whole European Union. To this end, it raises substantial volumes of funds on the markets which it directs towards financing investment projects in line with the policy objectives of the EU at the most favourable terms.

Why is the issue of spatial inequalities important for the EIB as bank? Because EIB needs to ground its action in addressing market failures and sub-optimal investment situations. Therefore, an understanding of the link between investment and spatial inequalities is extremely important for EIB. What do the spatial inequalities show in Europe? That more place-based analyses and policy responses are needed for all kinds of public interventions and investments. We are working in the EIB about how we could help through investments to overcome spatial inequalities within our current placebased approach. A key message stemming from our work in progress is that public policies, development strategies and investment planning need to pay more attention to spatial inequalities.

There is also the „green“ argument. The two objectives of the TA are equally important for the

EIB. The EIB works on a range of activities related to these two objectives of the TA. In November 2019, the EIB Board of Directors approved a new set of targets for climate action and environmental sustainability. This includes three key elements:

- The EIB Group will support € 1 trillion of investments for climate action and environmental sustainability in the critical decade from 2021 to 2030.
- The EIB will gradually increase the share of its financing dedicated to climate action and environmental sustainability to reach 50 % of its operations in 2025 and from then on.
- The EIB Group will align all its financing activities with the principles and goals of the Paris Agreement by the end of 2020.

This will be complemented by measures supporting a just transition for those regions or countries particularly affected by the transition. Kai Böhme already made a reference to „just transition“ in the morning. In the context of the just transition come the „just and green Europe“ objectives together. Ensuring a just energy transition: The EIB works closely with the European Commission to support investment by a Just Transition Mechanism through the Green Deal.

### **Place-sensitivity of EIB financing?**

One of the EIB's policy goals is to provide financing for the development of smart and sustainable regions by investing in the balanced and sustainable territorial development of regions through balanced regional investment programmes. Therefore, the EIB is a financing partner for regions and their investment programmes. EIB loans typically address priority investments under a region's integrated territorial development strategy. This is a key EIB project appraisal criterion. We use for that purpose the EIB's framework loan, an instrument that is well suited to such investment programmes.

To address spatial inequalities, investment decisions need to be place-sensitive, taking into account the specificities of a place and the broader impact of the investment in its wider regional, national or

European context (spill over effects). We strongly believe that the spatial effects of investments should be taken into account more systematically.

### **How do you see the EIB's role in the implementation of the Territorial Agenda?**

The EIB has been actively participating in the EU Territorial Agenda process through its membership of the NTCCP (The Network of Territorial Cohesion Contact Points) and the Directors General Territorial Cohesion meetings and its presence at all of the EC consultation sessions on the EU Territorial Agenda. Whilst most of the work programmes of each pilot action are still being defined, there are specific areas in which the EIB could potentially contribute:

1. by supporting the development of better funding approaches in the territorial context in complement to the European Commission;
2. by sharing the EIB's best practice experience across Europe;
3. by offering capacity for finance and advice for potential new projects in the pilot actions where appropriate;
4. to give a „reality check“ to proposed financing approaches.



#### Quotes: Alexandros Karvounis

„What do the spatial inequalities show in Europe? That more place-based analyses and policy responses are needed for all kinds of public interventions and investments.“

„A key message stemming from our work in progress is that public policies, development strategies and investment planning need to pay more attention to spatial inequalities.“

„The EIB works on a range of activities related to the two objectives of the TA. In November 2019, the EIB Board of Directors approved a new set of targets for climate action and environmental sustainability.“



# Perspectives of state and regional planning/development in Germany on the TA 2030

Contributors:

- Max Winter, State Ministry for Regional Development Saxony
- Thomas Kiwitt, Verband Region Stuttgart
- Hilmar von Lojewski, Association of German Cities

## The TA 2030 from the perspective of the federal states

Max Winter  
Saxon State Ministry for Regional Development



Figure 10: Max Winter (Photo: ARL)

### **The Territorial Agenda requires spatial planning for implementation**

The Saxon State Ministry for Regional Development (Sächsische Staatsministerium für Regionalentwicklung, SMR) was newly established in the federal state of Saxony at the beginning of 2020. It is responsible for rural development, urban planning, managing structural transformation in the two brown coal fields of Saxony and, not least, for ordinance survey and spatial planning. In all these fields there are considerable overlaps with European Union policy.

In contrast, from the perspective of spatial and state planning of the Free State of Saxony, the EU Territorial Agenda has played a somewhat subsidiary role. As implied – this is not because the perspective of my state on Europe is insufficiently

developed. For Saxony in particular, with its location on the border to Poland and the Czech Republic, issues of territorial coherence have played a great role for many years. However, the focus of my state is rather on instruments supported by EU funding – and not just those relevant for cross-border cooperation: Saxony, like all the federal states, profits greatly from the spatially focused planning and funding instruments of the European Union, ranging from LEADER to ESF, ERDF and Interreg.

Nonetheless, the Territorial Agenda itself not been of relevance in concrete spatial planning implementation to date – and this is probably true not only for Saxony. It is therefore to be welcomed that now four pilot projects are planned to demonstrate the practical implementation of the TA 2030 on a regional scale. In addition to the Germany-based pilot project which is investigating the prospects of structurally weak regions (particularly important for East Germany), the other three model projects on the role of small centres in large-scale interactional areas, on cross-border planning and on the consequences of sectoral economic policy for spatial structure focus on important parts of the TA 2030. This makes it possible to „operationalise“ the topics of the TA for the regional scale and to imbue them with „European added value“ thanks to exchanges of experience.

This will also have positive consequences for the perception of the – new – Territorial Agenda within Europe. To date this has been very varied. Member states with an established regional and spatial planning like Austria and Germany have tended to see the TA as providing rather „limited added value“ – after all they have national and regional plans and informal instruments of implementation with which they have already developed and, in some cases, implemented more advanced principles and strategies. However, for countries with little experience in publicly responsible regional development the TA 2030 can provide an initial impulse towards further implementation on the national, regional and perhaps even local scales.

These different positions are reflected in the preparatory discussions about the TA 2030, which in Germany must also be agreed between the federal states and with the Federation. Despite the progress made in terms of economic coherence, the positions of the federal states of western and eastern Germany continue to differ, especially with regard to questions of spatial development. This is certainly also true for the member states of central and eastern Europe and southern Europe on the one hand and those of western Europe on the other. It follows that perhaps not all the formulations of the draft TA 2030 are fully successful.

### **Global developments also have consequences for regions in Europe**

The – almost exclusive – thematic focus of the TA 2030 on a „greener“ and „more just“ Europe is certainly fundamentally acceptable and is consistently followed in the related principles. What is generally missing, however, are the spatial consequences of a globalised world – which will be felt in the regions of Europe – and the regional results of the competition that Europe as a whole must face. Structural transformation – which leads to the upgrading and degrading of economic locations everywhere in Europe – is by no means limited to the energy transformation of a „greener“ and more climate friendly Europe, but will also have a considerable regional dimension – as shown by the examples of the textile, steel and shipbuilding

industries. There is very little in the paper about this. The automotive industry and its suppliers, which are so important for Germany and particularly for Saxony, also face an uncertain future, as do their locations. The discussions are thus not really at an end – as is also revealed by the few careful comments in the draft on the still unforeseeable effects of the coronavirus pandemic.

### **Concrete implementation in pilot and model projects is „European added value“**

The intention to initiate European pilot projects in model regions in Leipzig at the same time when the TA 2030 is passed on 1 December 2020 is extremely welcome. Our experience of Demonstration Projects of Spatial Planning (Modellvorhaben der Raumordnung, MORO) in Saxony and that gained in the Interreg projects conducted in the cross-border areas with Poland and the Czech Republic leads us to recommend that as many as possible of the aforementioned aspects of spatial development should be separately addressed in different European model regions. Particular emphasis is given here to Saxony's positive experiences of transnational cooperation in the very demanding field of spatial development. With our central European partners we have carried out projects on heavy rainfall events caused by climate change, on transport and logistics in the TEN-T corridors, on industrial culture and on local transport in peripheral regions. These projects have led to the development of concrete implementation measures that can be transferred to other regions. The Federal Ministry of the Interior (Bundesministerium des Innern, BMI) and the federal states should provide the financial and personnel resources necessary for professional project management here. But the EU must also play its role: the further cuts to Interreg funds that have been announced are not a good sign for the concrete implementation of the TA 2030 in the regions of Europe.

### **Cartographically „visualising“ principles and scenarios of regional development**

The TA 2030 is intended to provide a „European vision“ of spatial development; it therefore cannot

eschew cartographical visualisation – if it is indeed to provide orientation. The good practice examples of cartographical visualisation found in the spatial development scenarios of a number of member states – e.g. Germany, France and Poland – should be drawn upon for use on the European scale. This cartographical representation will, however, need to be more abstract and generalising, if only because the competences of the EU in relation to the spatial planning of the member states are limited to territorial coherence policy. Otherwise it seems likely that the contents of the maps could contradict the individual visions of the regions and member states. Continuous spatial monitoring activities may benefit from the cartographical materials used to analyse the spatial structure, that have become an important basis for the state and regional planning of individual member states thanks to the numerous ESPON activities. This is particularly the case where spatial monitoring is in its infancy.

### **Using the Territorial Agenda to strengthen spatial planning in Europe**

The passing and implementation of the TA 2030 is often linked to hopes of a „Renaissance of spatial and regional planning in Europe“. As the European Union lacks competences in the field of spatial planning, achieving effective spatial and regional planning on the European level requires that a revaluation is initiated among the member states. A realistic starting point for this could be EU policies that are increasingly focused on balancing regional disparities in Europe – i.e. a field that in Germany rather belongs to the regional structural policy or fiscal equalisation policy. This has little to do with „planning euphoria“ for spatial and regional planning.

The lack of an effective spatial planning policy on the European level is often explained by the alleged orientation of the Union towards a „neoliberal economic policy“. In light of the current unmistakable tendencies in favour of a transfer union in Europe, it seems to me that there is no proof in support of this argument. This is also true of the draft of the TA 2030 itself, which is in no way influenced by a neoliberal philosophy – as indicated

by phrases like „the rich get richer and the poor get poorer“ and „Economic concentration ... create[s] ‘winner takes all’ economies...“.

In my opinion another critical point concerns the relationship to sectoral planning, which is largely ignored in the TA 2030. This includes environmental policy, which is increasingly sectorally based. An effective spatial and regional planning is only possible – in Europe and in Germany – if strong sectoral planning authorities in areas such as environmental protection, climate protection and nature protection are willing and able to be integrated into spatial appraisal processes, in other words are willing and able to make sectoral compromises in negotiations.

#### **→ Quotes: Max Winter**

„Structural transformation – which leads to the upgrading and degrading of economic locations everywhere in Europe – is by no means limited to the energy transformation of a „greener“ and more climate friendly Europe, but will also have a considerable regional dimension – as shown by the examples of the textile, steel and shipbuilding industries. There is very little in the paper about this.“

„The EU must also play its role: the further cuts to Interreg funds that have been announced are not a good sign for the concrete implementation of the TA 2030 in the regions of Europe.“

„In my opinion another critical point concerns the relationship to sectoral planning, which is largely ignored in the TA 2030. This includes environmental policy, which is increasingly sectorally based.“

## The perspective of the Stuttgart Region on the TA 2030

Thomas Kiwitt  
Verband Region Stuttgart



Figure 11: Thomas Kiwitt (Photo: ARL)

The cooperation between territories mentioned in the Territorial Agenda 2030 (TA) plays a prominent role for the Verband Region Stuttgart: in European networks (e.g. Metrex), in the EU-International Urban Cooperation (China, USA) and in numerous projects and (funding) programmes (e.g. ESPON, Interreg, Horizon 2020).

Cohesion, a core element of the TA, is also of great importance, as the EU needs solidarity to be strengthened. However, the various subareas are extremely heterogeneous, demonstrating a functional, administrative and economic diversity that does not permit universal solutions. In addition – as with German spatial planning policies – the focus cannot be solely on the promotion of structurally weaker areas. The specific challenges of (apparently) stronger regions must also be equally considered and integrated into sets of measures. It is therefore surprising that hardly any emphasis is given to „competitiveness“ in the update of the TA. This is also inconsistent with the content of the Urban Agenda for the EU, which expressly targets not only the „just“ and „green“ but also the „productive city“.

However, the two topics „just“ and „green“ include new, challenging objectives – but ones that will only be effective if they reach those to whom they are addressed. „More objectives“ do not necessarily lead to „better quality“ planning or measures. It is thus important that the TA focuses more strongly on implementation in future. Germany has a particular „instigating“ role to play here. The country’s federal diversity and experience with far-reaching municipal autonomy offer numerous concrete starting points for a national „follow-up“ – to the TA and also to the Leipzig Charter.

Effective instruments, regional scope for action and appropriate levels of targeted finance are likely to be more important here than more conceptual work and guiding principles. What is required is a successful procedure for building bridges between sectoral departments, governance levels and administrative areas – not just in order to improve efficiency but also to gain acceptance among the population and to win majorities in the forums and committees.

The updating of the Leipzig Charter emphasises the significance of regional coordination, an approach that is also useful for territorial cooperation. It would be logical not only to use the „Functional Urban Areas“ as an (important) unit of analysis but also to strengthen them conceptually. This (urban-) regional scale is suitable to link the implementation of tasks on a subsidiary level and strategic target-setting for the entire area. It serves the entire range from „big picture“ to concrete local implementation and the „enabling“ of small municipalities. In brief: the Territorial Agenda 2030 formulates the „right“ objectives. This makes it even more important that these objectives are actually achieved – not just in Europe.



## Quotes: Thomas Kiwitt

„With the territorial issues of climate change, mobility transition, energy transition and economic structural change that touch the foundations of our economic structures, our lives together and our spatial structures, we see that we need far-reaching ideas. At any rate more than a pilot project here and there.“

„The TA is an important framework paper – no question about it. When Germany introduces it in the course of the Council presidency then it would be logical to organise a national follow-up and to show how this paper can be implemented. With strong regions, federal diversity and confident municipalities we have the best preconditions to achieve the – ambitious – objectives.“

„A significant merit of the TA is that it finally clearly identifies territorial issues as such. For many years the energy and mobility transitions, for instance, have been at the top of the agenda, but the spatial dimensions are very seldom understood. Even if many people do not know the Leipzig Charter, many can formulate clear expectations of towns as homes, as economic locations and as places in which to live. This is equally true for larger territorial settings.“

## The perspective of the Deutscher Städtetag on the TA 2030

Hilmar von Lojewski  
Association of German Cities



Figure 12: Hilmar von Lojewski (Photo: ARL)

Despite the high level of abstraction, many towns and cities are greatly interested in the Territorial Agenda 2030 (TA 2030). The TA 2030 naturally embraces the need for abstraction and the „bigger picture“, but from the municipal perspective it is important that a Territorial Agenda shows what can have a concrete impact on the local, regional and supraregional levels. It is therefore worthwhile to breakdown the Territorial Agenda using maps, pictures and projects and to link it to a programme of investment and action. This requires close, integrated cooperation between the different parts of the Commission and the introduction of integrated finance instruments – one pot for many integrated regional development projects. It also seems important to link the Territorial Agenda to the same understanding of sustainability as in the Agenda 2030, the European Sustainable Development Goals, the Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities or the current updating of the New Leipzig Charter.

The updating of the Territorial Agenda 2030 was greatly welcomed. Coordinated spatial development across territorial bodies and state and national borders concerns towns and cities and requires constant efforts on the urban-regional scale. As emphasised in the introduction, towns and municipalities require support and opportunities to ensure sustainable development. Towns and cities

assume that this support will not be limited to less prosperous areas. Due to their regional governance structures, even dynamic agglomerations reach the limits of strategic spatial planning and development. In terms of implementation, the towns and cities therefore encourage an assessment of concrete approaches to promote regions which the EU defines as more developed.

It is not yet quite clear how the New Leipzig Charter and the TA 2030 should work together. The towns and cities are therefore in favour of a comparison of the two documents and more referencing between them. As well as a look at the European regions, the towns, cities and urban regions are named as actors and attention is drawn to the need for action on the urban and urban-rural scale. There is, however, no precise definition of the various spatial extents and different target groups. For example, it is not clear how the good governance approaches (e.g. place-based approach and multi-level cooperation) named in the TA 2030 and the New Leipzig Charter are connected with one another.

From a municipal point of view, the significance of governance across all levels and between all territorial authorities, sectors and groups of actors must be explicitly confirmed. This is the key to broad and shared responsibility for the goals of the Territorial Agenda. It is also suggested that the involvement of civil society should be more clearly formulated. This corresponds to Objective 5 of the EU's future cohesion policy „Europe closer to citizens“.

The European regions will be differently affected by climate change. This leads to (new) interactions both on smaller and larger scales. The approaches and measures in the field of climate protection and adaptation should therefore be worked out in more detail. Overall the TA 2030 should provide a framework for joint research, shared action and management strategies based on solidarity. This would enable us to together cope better with the territorial dimension of climate change and to develop joint adaptation strategies. This also applies to other crises (e.g. the coronavirus pandemic), as such crises undoubtedly have a territorial dimension.



#### Quotes: Hilmar von Lojewski

„Does territorial planning have a chance? Yes, if... From the municipal perspective the if is always determined by how well instruments can be implemented.“

„For me it is important that we also see reference to strongly growing regions in the Territorial Agenda, and not just to the weakly growing. Disparities do not only emerge in weakly growing regions but also and particularly in strongly growing ones. The differences are simply even larger there.“

„Close cooperation is needed between the Territorial Agenda and the Leipzig Charter.“

„We should definitely work in images and always immediately link the images to investments. I would like to see an interactive map of the regions into which European finance flows – also for political reasons, also for reasons of imputability, also for reasons of justification – to show that something is going on there as an indirect result also of a Territorial Agenda.“

# Statement from the perspective of the European Committee of the Regions

Minister Birgit Honé,  
Minister of Federal and European Affairs and Regional Development of Lower Saxony



Figure 13: Minister Birgit Honé (Photo: ARL)

Dear Professor Dr. Danielzyk,  
Dear Dr. Meltzian,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for inviting me to this event, because it gives me the opportunity to talk about an issue of paramount importance, wearing a number of hats:

- as Minister for Europe,
- as Regional Minister,
- and as Lower Saxony's member of the European Committee of the Regions.

The Territorial Agenda seeks to create equivalent living conditions and to tackle spatial disparities in the European Union, and this, on a smaller scale, is also our goal for Lower Saxony and its regions. This is what it boils down to when we aim to achieve a sustainable spatial development policy.

Creating equivalent living conditions is one of the, if not the key challenge of our time. It is about fair distribution, access opportunities and adequate access to services, and, at the smallest level, about individual people's homes – it is about being able to lead a good life wherever I feel at home and where I wish to live. I would like to have a nice, affordable flat, I would like to work, I would like to

support my family and myself, I would like to pursue leisure activities, I would like to be mobile. In other words, this issue is far from abstract; it has a direct impact on people and is highly emotional.

The European financial and economic crisis that began in 2007 showed us what the consequences of disparities can be for the whole of Europe.

The effects of the crisis differed considerably throughout Europe, depending on the orientation and stability of the economy, or how well the fallback systems worked. As a result, disparities between many regions of Europe in terms of living conditions have intensified.

The same can be said for climate change, the spatial impact of which also varies considerably. This is true not only within the EU, but also within nation states and regions. Agricultural areas, a common feature of Lower Saxony, are particularly affected by dry summers. The debate about insurance, limited water use, crop losses and food prices was with us once again this year, affecting not only direct agricultural producers, but entire regions and their value chains. Consequently, in the absence of adaptation measures, climate change exacerbates the divergence in living conditions.

The Energiewende, or energy transition is also associated with climate change. It has repercussions on the entire region if, for example, the main employer is an energy-intensive company – or a car manufacturer that various suppliers are dependent on for survival. Consequently, the entire region must face – and actively shape – the transition process.

The digital transformation is another challenge that is changing our lives at breakneck speed, whilst at the same time opening up entirely new opportunities.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic creates enormous problems for our society, our health care system and our economy, further aggravating disparity. It is almost impossible to assess the medium and long-term effects at present.

Not only are the various regions affected to a different extent, they are also able, in different ways, to cope with the challenges; and this hampers territorial cohesion.

How then, ladies and gentlemen, can we manage to adapt? By developing instruments, while respecting European provisions, that make regions – urban and rural regions alike – not only more resilient, but also capable of continuously adapting to change. This means that we must teach regions to establish processes so as to implement transformations. For one thing is clear: change occurs continuously and at an increasingly faster pace – it is simply not enough to just turn the corner.

The key is enabling regional actors to identify their specific challenges, and to develop and implement responses. This will only work if they embrace sustainable development, also taking into account new green technologies. That is my core message as a minister of Lower Saxony, a message that I communicate to the region as Regional Minister and to Brussels as Minister for Europe; this message has also been communicated to the European Commission on various occasions by the Committee of the Regions.

I am well aware that the European Committee of the Regions, or CoR for short, is not necessarily always seen as a central player in view of its capabilities of exerting influence. I believe this is unwarranted. Given its role as a representative of regions, the Committee is an important source of information for political Brussels, enabling it to familiarise itself with local challenges and perspectives. And it is a way of fostering acceptance of a decision on the ground in advance by involving regional actors.

Its voice by all means carries weight with the Commission and the European Parliament when it takes a united stance and positions itself at an early stage. What is more, it is a platform where the concerns of regions can be taken to the European level, urging the Commission to pursue policies that enable regions to achieve sustainable development.



Let me give you a current example. In the European Committee of the Regions, I recently reported on an opinion on the topic of cleaner, i.e. green hydrogen. It was adopted by the CoR on 2 July. And it is important to me that the European Commission, when it published the EU Hydrogen Strategy a week later, incorporated a number of key demands that had previously been the focus of intense debate with us. Examples include

- an EU-wide sustainability classification of hydrogen,
- EU-wide production targets,
- the creation of lead markets for green hydrogen technologies
- and its use in steel production.

Aside from that, the EU must revise its legislation on renewable energy and on transport and energy infrastructure in order to increase the attractiveness of this technology.

Why is this important to me, as a Regional Minister who keeps an eye on the issue of territorial development? Because we in Lower Saxony have a number of such regions that use this new technology as a catalyst for a transformation process, enabling them to adapt to current change processes.

I said earlier that we must create instruments while respecting European provisions, but we have the possibility, through the CoR, to influence these European provisions so that they enable our concept of these instruments to be incorporated.

Ladies and gentlemen,  
so as you can see, we in the CoR do not only concern ourselves with sustainable regional development when commenting directly on the process of the Territorial Agenda. But of course that is what the Committee did, with relative unity, in keeping with the importance of the issue. In the process, we emphasised that the Territorial Agenda did not need to be completely rewritten, but merely adapted to the new developments.

In its plenary session on 8 and 9 October 2019, the CoR decided by a large majority to adopt the

own-initiative opinion entitled „The CoR's contribution to the renewed Territorial Agenda with special emphasis on community-led local development“, following a process with little controversy.

Although the title is cumbersome, it strikes the core of the matter precisely. For regional development to be accepted, sustainable and effective, it must be pursued by the region itself and supported by the community.

The opinion therefore rightly calls for bigger ambitions and the development of territorial instruments, not least because they help to achieve the goal of getting Europe closer to citizens and to make the goals of the Territorial Agenda visible locally.

In light of this, the CoR focuses in particular on community-led local development. I can only concur with this. Here in Lower Saxony, our experience with the creativity of local action groups in the context of LEADER has been very good. They are highly enthusiastic about taking action to make their towns desirable places to live, contributing to their future viability, attractiveness and, ultimately, their survival.

In Lower Saxony, we also back regionalised approaches outside LEADER, too, and consequently outside the focus on rural areas. We view our regions as regions of the future where we intend to strengthen structures that enable regions to leverage their potential, drive development forward, and respond to change.

In my ministry, we are currently developing a new central regional policy tool to support regions. It is a service offered by the federal state to the regions: with the help of voluntary cross-county cooperation involving social actors, central tasks for the future are identified on the ground and regional development projects are implemented.

Ladies and gentlemen,  
You must have confidence in your regions!

We have been following this principle for a number of years now. In 2015, Lower Saxony was the first federal state to issue an experimental directive on the promotion of social innovations. This directive fosters new paths and approaches for addressing social challenges throughout Lower Saxony, which are developed, tested and implemented in the federal state's regions.

Failure is an absolute eventuality. After all, it is virtually impossible to leave familiar territory and generate innovation without taking some risk. They specifically concern projects aimed at adapting to change in work and at securing and improving access to social and health services in the context of regional services for the public. By pursuing this approach, Lower Saxony played a pioneering role both nationally and Europe-wide.

Ladies and gentlemen,  
I would like to highlight four further core demands set out in the opinion which show us what regions expect from political leaders:

1. The future Territorial Agenda and the European Structural and Investment Funds, i.e. the three funds of particular relevance to us – ERDF, ESF and EAFRD – must take the goal of achieving equivalent living conditions better into account. I can subscribe to that, ladies and gentlemen, without hesitation, and I also explained why at the start of my talk.
2. We need stronger links between cohesion policy and the Territorial Agenda in all stages of planning, implementation and monitoring of programmes. I believe that this, too, is correct because the Territorial Agenda provides us with a guiding principle and a benchmark that is accepted across borders: sustainable development for the creation of equivalent living conditions.
3. The future Territorial Agenda must support the role of small and medium-sized cities in achieving balanced, polycentric development across the EU. That, too, is absolutely correct. Given their role as anchors, small and medium-sized cities are central to the creation of

attractive living conditions in rural areas. Or, put differently, rural regions can only be strengthened if cities are included in the equation. This is why we launched the Future Spaces programme in Lower Saxony, a programme targeted at precisely such centres that fulfil important supply functions for their surrounding areas. The aim of this programme is to develop projects that help strengthen cities in their role as anchors for the rural areas that surround them. A very wide range of projects are funded. They range from projects to enhance the attractiveness of city centres, mobility projects and co-working spaces to projects to improve care and health services. Local authorities should focus on local needs, and not simply address a specified issue in a particular thematic area. And, as you can imagine, the programme is highly in demand, owing to this room for manoeuvre, and also because we promote consultancy and coaching services to transform good ideas into concepts that are ready for application.

4. An „agenda for rural areas“ must be created that regards rural areas as living and economic areas and not only as agricultural ones. To that too I can subscribe.

Rural areas need a supply infrastructure that enables people of all age groups to live there at all stages of their lives. And they need attractive jobs. Digitalisation might present an opportunity in this regard.

Ladies and gentlemen,  
Brussels and regions share the objective of achieving balanced territorial development. Rather than wanting to equalise everything, it is a matter of strengthening the different characteristics of places and regions and utilising them in the spirit of joint development. Lower Saxony seeks answers to these challenges, for example, also in collaboration with its European neighbours within the EU's Interreg programmes.

To give an example, energy solutions involving the use of green hydrogen are tested in a variety of projects, also within Interreg programmes.

As I said at the beginning, many regions are facing concrete challenges in shaping transformation processes in an effort to adapt to technological change. And it often makes sense to search for solutions across borders.

Interreg projects represent the idea of transnational coordination and cooperation at different levels. In the process, they foster a very important principle that can be derived from the Territorial Agenda – the development and preservation of functional areas. After all, areas do not end at administrative boundaries or national borders.

It is therefore of particular concern to Lower Saxony, when it comes to renewing the Territorial Agenda, that Interreg should not only include the approach of sectoral projects, but also the possibility for cross-sectoral territorial projects. It is important to us in national and international aspects of regional development. A purely sectoral perspective that

considers aspects as pillars is of no use to regions, regardless of whether a cross-border approach or a national region is concerned.

For the challenges they face are complex, and cannot be addressed within a single sector only. And it is increasingly difficult to provide people with an explanation when good ideas for a solution fail due to a lack of competence, an inability to cooperate, or incapacity to think in a cross-pillar way.

I can summarise by saying that spatial development policy faces major challenges in the years ahead. But the renewal processes related to the Territorial Agenda give us the opportunity to find common solutions for Europe and its regions using contemporary European approaches. With this in mind, it is essential that regions get involved and that they find an open ear in Brussels.

Thank you for your attention!

# Conclusion & recommendations

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The new version of the Territorial Agenda (TA) has attracted considerable attention – and the Discussion Forum on Spatial Development 2020 has, for one thing, demonstrated the wide range of expectations and ideas for implementation. Then again, it has also revealed the diversity of critical views towards framework conditions and obstacles to implementation that exist from the local, regional and state level to the national and international perspective within the EU.

- **Promoting the territorial perspective and line of reasoning:** The TA may help to link national perspectives and the European level in the debate on future developments: the Agenda and its development process open up a space for discussion not only at the European level, but also, above all, at the national level, for the European perspective and the European dimensions of spatial development policy. Only then can conflicts of interest be named, formulated and addressed. And yet the TA should not be understood as a new planning concept that is to be implemented separately or sectorally in individual countries or regions. Instead, the Agenda should be discussed and applied in all planning and development processes and their overarching strategies.
- **Expectations must remain realistic:** It must be stated clearly that the TA is an informal instrument that does not have binding legal force or any financial resources of its own. The Agenda can therefore only succeed if its possibilities for implementation are used in such a way that it is linked to its own implementation framework, which is formulated/differentiated specifically in each member state, and possibly even equipped with additional financial resources. In addition, it is essential that actors at lower administrative levels, especially municipalities, are actively involved in this process. On the whole, the implementation of the TA 2030 requires evidence (maps, see below), demonstration projects (the six planned pilot actions) and a cross-sectoral dialogue from the EU to the regional level.
- **The TA places a new emphasis on „fairness and sustainability“ to counteract the principle of competition, which has so far been strongly represented in the EU, and forces us to critically examine previous regional growth strategies:** It is noteworthy that the term „competitiveness“ is hardly mentioned in the new version of the TA – unlike the Urban Agenda for the EU, which refers, among other things, to the „productive city“. As such, the TA and its implementation must also take into account the economic dimension. It can be noted, for example, that some regions which were previously thought to be structurally strong are currently missing out on many economic developments. Closer scrutiny should be given to identify these gaps in detail and to determine the precise area in which countermeasures can be taken. However, it will be impossible to iron out physical or structural inequalities in regions that have always had a different structure. In addition, competitive orientation and compensatory orientation must be balanced to a certain extent. What is more, however, the focus cannot be solely on promoting disadvantaged areas, because structurally strong regions must also address specific challenges. Both aspects must be taken into consideration when implementing the TA.
- **The concepts for spatial development in Germany should be adapted with the TA in mind:** In addition to the TA, an atlas with 49 maps (BMI/BBSR 2020, [www.atlasta2030.de](http://www.atlasta2030.de)) was published, generated by the Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (BBSR) and ESPON in accordance with the challenges and priorities identified there. These maps should be referred to accordingly, and used, for one thing, as a basis to initiate an implementation guide and corresponding projects. For another thing, the thematic priorities of the TA should be reflected in the German concepts for spatial development, as a framework for spatial development

policy at all levels in Europe. In particular, the comprehensive concept of a „Green Europe“ (see the TA, as well as the European Commission’s „Green Deal“) must be incorporated into the concepts and strategies for action. Meanwhile, the issue has also taken on a much more comprehensive and greater meaning in Germany – see, for example, the reasoning for the phase-out of coal – than was the case when the visions were last revised. The concept of a „Just Europe“ corresponds to the vision of equal living conditions, which is currently of paramount importance in German spatial development policy (see, among other things, the relevant government commission). However, it is not yet fully reflected in the texts related to

concepts and strategies for action. The logical consequence would therefore be to revise the „Concepts and Strategies for Spatial Development“ in the light of the TA 2030. After all, the last version was published by the Standing Conference of Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning (MKRO) in 2016.

### **Reference**

BMI – Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community / BBSR – Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (2020): Atlas for the Territorial Agenda 2030. Maps on European Territorial Development. Berlin/Bonn.

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