

*Geografia e Ordenamento do Território, Revista Electrónica*

Centro de Estudos de Geografia e Ordenamento do Território

<http://cegot.org>

ISSN 2182-1267



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## **The ‘europeanization of spatial planning processes in Portugal within the EU cohesion policy strategies (1989-2013)**

**Referência:** Medeiros, E. (2014). The ‘europeanization of spatial planning processes in Portugal within the EU cohesion policy strategies (1989-2013). *Revista de Geografia e Ordenamento do Território (GOT)*, n.º 6 (dezembro). Centro de Estudos de Geografia e Ordenamento do Território, p. 201-222

### **Resumo**

Portugal é uma jovem democracia. No entanto, já é membro da actual União Europeia (UE) há quase três décadas. Durante este período de tempo, recebeu mais de 75 biliões de euros da Política de Coesão da UE, de modo a corrigir os seus desequilíbrios regionais e a potenciar o desenvolvimento territorial. Como seria de esperar, as estratégias de intervenção desenhadas para cada um dos quatro ciclos de programação tiveram uma profunda influência das propostas e linhas de orientação comunitárias. Neste contexto, o objectivo deste artigo é o de apresentar uma análise crítica da evolução das linhas estratégicas da Política de Coesão da UE em Portugal, e da influência de documentos-chave da Comissão Europeia (EC) relacionados com o ordenamento do território (EDEC, Agendas Territoriais, Programa ESPON), no desenho dessas estratégias e as suas consequências no desenvolvimento territorial de Portugal, ao longo das últimas duas décadas.

**Palavras-Chave:** ESPON, Ordenamento do Território, Política de Coesão da UE, Estratégias de Desenvolvimento Territorial, EDEC.

## **Abstract**

Portugal is a young European democracy. However, it has been a member of the European Union (EU) for twenty seven years. During this time, it received more than 75 billion euros from the EU Cohesion Policy, in order to correct regional imbalances and to boost territorial development. As might be expected, the intervention strategies designed for these programming cycles had a profound influence from the European Commission (EC) guidelines and proposals. Hence, the goal of this article is to present a critical analysis of evolution of the EU Cohesion Policy strategic guidelines and the influence of the ESDP, the Territorial Agendas and the ESPON Programme in the design of these strategies, and its consequences in the Portuguese territorial development, during the last two decades.

**Keywords:** ESPON, Territorial Planning, EU Cohesion Policy, Territorial Development Strategies, ESDP.

## **1. Introduction**

Portugal is neither an old nor new EU Member State. Yet, it has come a long way in following EU regulations and legislation, since it joined the present EU, in 1986. This fact did not permit the Portuguese participation in all the mainstream EU discussions concerning EU spatial planning issues. Yet, it ensured its presence, and active participation in the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) making, which can still be regarded as the most important milestone in the EU spatial planning achievements. Alongside, several Portuguese entities have also marked their active presence in the elaboration of several ESPON (European Spatial Planning Observatory Network) reports. The creation of this Observatory, in 2002, can be regarded as another key-milestone in bringing to the fore EU spatial planning analysis, by providing detailed spatial information.

In short, this article aims to shed new light, and to give additional inputs to the academic discussion on this specific process of Europeanization: the transformation, accommodation, and absorption of EU Territorial Planning Processes within the EU Member-States territorial development policies. In this context, this paper starts by dedicating the first topic to a brief overview of the existing literature on the Europeanization process and its consequences in producing domestic policy changes.

Secondly, it dedicates a whole topic to better understand the evolution of the spatial planning process in the EU, and in particular, to an analysis of the main goals expressed in some of the EU spatial planning key-documents (Torremolinos Charter, ESDP, and Territorial

Agendas). This is followed by a more empirical analysis, which sheds some light upon the relation between the EU Cohesion Policy implemented strategies in Portugal (in all four programming cycles), and some of the guiding principles presented in the ESDP and the Lisbon and the EU 2020 strategy. Finally, the remaining topic centres its attention on the ESDP and ESPON evidences in the Portuguese Spatial Policy Programme (PNPOT).

As can be seen in the following topics, in terms of methodology, the article's main conclusions result mainly from a host of report readings, not only the already mentioned key-mainstream EU spatial planning documents, but also many others related to the EU Cohesion Policy in Portugal. It is also important to mention that this paper was elaborated as one complementary analysis of a wider study, done by the author, on the effects and impacts of the EU Cohesion Policy in Portugal (1990-2010), in the last three years.

## **2. The Europeanization and domestic policy change**

According to Magone (2006: 14), Europeanization, in its most simple interpretation, can be understood as the impact of EU policies on politics, polities and policies in a given territory. In turn, Bache (2008: 9) argues that this concept should be related with the reorientation or reformulation of policies in domestic arenas, in order to reflect policies, practices and preferences generated within the EU Governance system. In this framework, we prefer to denominate this process as EUpeization (Medeiros, 2012) or, as others call it: EU-ization.

The distinction between the EU-ization and the most commonly used term of 'Europeanization' is deeply analysed by Hakeem (2013). In short, this author argues that, even though both concepts are not mutually exclusive, Europeanization has a broader European dimension, and can be defined as "the process of diffusing and internalizing norms, values, and beliefs over time and space throughout Europe states, including the EU, and European citizens" (Hakeem, 2013; 8). Conversely, EU-ization, is a EU-centric process, which results primarily "from transfers of organizational and institutional practices and policies between the sui generis European Union polity and representatives of the Member States (...). In other words, EU-ization primarily involves transfers within the EU or directly interacting with the EU, especially those transfers that are predominantly regulatory and situated within the historical scope of states' accession to the EU (Hakeem, 2013; 7-9). Be

that as it may, the intensity in which Member-States are ‘affected’ by Europeanization/EU-ization processes varies considerably (Table 1).

When it comes to Portugal, Magone (2006:28) advocates that the Europeanization process was particularly strong in the external policies arena, which contributed to the reinforcement of the Portuguese position, within the international community institutional networks. In the same vein, Ferrão (2010: 78) concludes that Portugal’s adherence to the present European Union was pivotal in building a trans-national vision of spatial development, as well as in implementing a new discourse on the desired future of a more united and diverse European Space. Nevertheless, Soares (2010: 334) points out other areas of state influence, such as justice and the educational system, where the Europeanization process is less visible.

Table 1 – Categorizing domestic responses to the EU

| Category       | Features   | Degree of domestic change |
|----------------|--|---------------------------|
| Transformation | States fundamentally change existing policies, practices, and/or preferences or replace them with new ones                                   | High                      |
| Accommodation  | States adopt existing policies, practices and/or preferences without changing their essential features                                       | Modest                    |
| Absorption     | States incorporate EU policies, practices and/or preferences without substantially modifying existing policies, practices and/or preferences | Low                       |

Source (Börzel and Risse, 2003 – seen in Bache, 2008:12)

Altogether, in Portugal, there are clear visible signs of the EU influences in the design of existing spatial planning strategies, namely in using some new EU terminologies, and in “the adoption of new concepts, the building of spatial visions of the European space and the development of new collaboration, cooperation and decision practices” (Ferrão, 2010: 78). In other words, according to the same author, “the regional management of the territory in Portugal, as a concept, a policy and a practice, has become European and, because of that, has been modernized”.

Here, the EU Cohesion Policy has had a crucial role in the absorption of new spatial development visions, practices and processes, in the EU Member States (Paraskevopoulos, 2000), both directly and indirectly. Directly, because it finances several projects which have a tremendous impact in shaping the regional development in the EU space, and namely in Portugal, where it stands out as the major tool to promote regional development (OECD, 2008). Indirectly, because the implemented strategies designed within the various Operational Programmes tend to include several recommendations expressed in some of the mainstream EU 'strategic spatial planning reports' (ESDP – European Spatial Development Perspective, Territorial Agendas and the ESPON Programme), for example, in promoting a more polycentric urban network, and in protecting and preserving natural resources.

### **3. Spatial planning in the EU: a summary**

It is a well-known fact that the spatial planning is not included in the EU Treaty, and therefore it is not regarded as a EU formal competence (Ferrão, J. 2003: Dühr, *et al.*, 2010), even though some EU policies, such as the Cohesion Policy and the Common Agriculture Policy, have profound effects in the EU spatial arrangements. Furthermore, despite the reluctant attitude from most EU Member-States, the European Commission (EC), and in particular the DG-Regio, has financed several influential studies regarding direct and indirect spatial planning and development trends at the European scale, while encouraging transnational cooperation (Dühr, *et al.*, 2010: 15).

Indeed, the history of spatial planning intentions within the EU has come a long way since the adoption of the European Regional/Spatial Planning Charter, in 1983 at the 6th Session of the CEMAT in Torremolinos. This report proposed a more coordinated effort of the implementation of various sectorial policies and the several levels of decision-making in the EU. In addition, it invoked the need for a more balanced socioeconomic development of the EU regions, the improvement of the quality of life, the responsible management of natural resources and protection of the environment, and a rational use of land (EC, 1983: 14-15).

Soon after, the Jacques Delors Presidency (1985-95) launched the ground-bases of the transnational spatial planning at the European scale, and the territory was included as an

important coordinating factor of the EU sectorial policies (Ferrão, 2010: 77). In simple terms, and according to Costa (2005: 260), one can define three major periods in the process of crystalizing the role of spatial planning in the EU:

1 – Pre-Torremolinos Charter (... - 1983): The first EC initiatives on regional development date from the mid 1960's. In 1968 DG-Regio is created and in 1975 the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) is launched.

2 – From Torremolinos Charter until the ESDP (1983 - 1995): The goal of achieving a more socioeconomic cohesive territory was reinforced in the EU Single Act, adopted in 1986. This Act, in turn, strengthened the integrated approach of the structural funds (Pires, 1998). With the coming into force of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, there was an intensification of the cooperation between the EU Member-States, while the need to reinforce the socioeconomic cohesion was highlighted. As a consequence, the Cohesion Fund was specifically created in 1993, to boost the less developed EU Member-States at the time (Portugal, Greece, Spain and Ireland). In the meantime, several EU spatial planning documents are released: the Europe 2000 (EC, 1991), and the Europe 2000+ (EC, 1994). In addition, the Committee of the Regions was established in 1992, one year after the Committee of Spatial Development.

3 – Post-ESDP (1999 - ...): Following a series of meetings, the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) was finally released in 1999. This widely regarded milestone 'mother document' of the EU Spatial Planning brought to the fore the concept of polycentricity - a novelty. However, according to some, it failed in giving a coherent vision of an EU Spatial Planning Policy (Faludi, 2010: 106). Nevertheless, from that moment on, the support policies aiming at establishing a more polycentric, balanced and sustainable EU territory became an intrinsic element of the Spatial Planning discourse in the EU political arena, as it can be witnessed in the two released Territorial Agendas (EC, 2007, 2011). Even so, other mainstream EU Documents like the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion (EC, 2008) and the Europe 2020 (EC, 2010) fail in highlighting the need for a more balanced and polycentric EU territory. Finally, a strong emphasis should be given to the establishment of the European Observation Network for Territorial Development, in 2002, and the consequent plethora of

produced reports analysing the EU territory, and in particular the effects and impacts of many EU sectorial policies (ESPON, 2006, 2006b).

Curiously, and according to Faludi (2006), if the EU Treaty, which was presented the 1<sup>st</sup> of November 2006, had been approved, the territorial cohesion would have become a shared competence of the EU Member-States. In spite of all, the ESDP is still regarded as a strategic guideline of the EU space development, namely in guaranteeing a greater coherence and complementarity between the regional, national and the EU Member-States sectorial and spatial policies, both horizontally and vertically (Ferrão, 2010: 81).

On a general note, and going back to the mainstream EU Spatial Planning documents, we can detect a change from an initial strong emphasis on achieving the goal of socioeconomic equity, towards a reinforced focus on the aim of turning the EU territory more polycentric, connected and competitive. This change commenced with the release of the ESDP, and was further intensified with the two territorial agendas (Table 2).

In Portugal, and according to Ferrão (2010: 82), the ESDP had a relevant impact in the strategic design of the third Cohesion Policy programming period (2000-2006), namely by bringing to light the notion of promoting a more polycentric EU territory, in which each region should integrate a wider vision (supra-national) of spatial development, in order to solidify world economic integration zones. In effect, the same author states that the ESDP has a strong presence in the National Law which manages Spatial and Urban Planning<sup>1</sup>, and also in the National Spatial Policy Programme<sup>2</sup>. Also, presently, the Regional Spatial Plans follow the principles, language, and concepts expressed in the ESDP.

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<sup>1</sup> Lei de Bases da Política de Ordenamento do Território e de Urbanismo

<sup>2</sup> Programa Nacional da Política de Ordenamento do Território -

Table 2 – EU Spatial Planning Mainstream Documents main goals

| Transversal Goal                                | Torremolinos Charter  | ESDP   | Territorial Agenda 2007  | Territorial Agenda 2020   |
|---|---|--|--|---|
| A – Polycentric Development                     |   | - Development of a balanced and polycentric urban system and a new urban-rural relationship  | - Strengthen Polycentric Development and Innovation through Networking of City Regions and Cities<br>- Support the Strengthening and Extension of Trans-European Networks              | Promote polycentric and balanced territorial development<br>- Encouraging integrated development in cities, rural and specific regions<br>- Territorial integration in cross-border and transnational functional regions<br>- Improving territorial connectivity for individuals, communities and enterprises |
| B – Socioeconomic Equity                        | - Balanced socio-economic development of the regions<br>- Improvement of the quality of life              | - Securing parity of access to infrastructure and knowledge;                                 |  |   |
| C – Heritage and Environment                    | - Responsible management of natural resources and protection of the environment<br>- Rational use of land | - Sustainable development, prudent management and protection of nature and cultural heritage | - Promote Trans-European Risk Management including the Impacts of Climate Change<br>- Strengthening of Ecological Structures and Cultural Resources as the Added Value for Development | - Managing and connecting ecological, landscape and cultural values of regions  |
| D – New forms of governance and competitiveness |   |  | - New Forms of Partnership and Territorial Governance between Rural and Urban Areas<br>- Promote Regional Clusters of Competition and Innovation in Europe                             | - Ensuring global competitiveness of the regions based on strong local economies  |

Source (EC, 1983; EC, 1999; EC, 2007; EC, 2011) – Author's compilation



Moreover, in the Fourth Programming Cycle of the EU Cohesion Policy (2007-2013) in Portugal (known as QREN in Portuguese, or NSRF in English), a specific Operational Programme was dedicated to valorise the territory, which served as a vehicle to implement a spatial development vision, by focusing in four main goals: (i) reinforce international connectivity; (ii) protect and valorise the environment; (iii) promote urban policies; and (iv) reinforce infra-structural networks to achieve social and territorial cohesion. Indeed, in its strategic goals, some of the ESDP and the Territorial Agendas recommendations of promoting a more balanced, harmonious and polycentric urban system are present. Also, the goal of Territorial Cohesion is very much an 'EU construction' and is used several times in the proposed NSRF strategy (OBS\_QCAIII, 2007).

#### **4. Relation between the EU Cohesion Policy's main goals in Portugal (1989-2013) and the EU spatial planning mainstream documents**

There is a wide recognition of the EU Spatial Planning Mainstream Documents influence in the Portuguese National and Regional Spatial Planning related documents (Costa, 2005: 266). These effects are especially noted in the National Spatial Policy Programme (DGOTDU, 2007), which clarifies the vision for Portugal 2025, by proposing six strategic objectives to "preserve and value biodiversity, landscapes and cultural heritage; reinforce territorial competitiveness and international integration; promote the polycentric development of territories; ensure territorial equity in the provision of infrastructure and collective services; expand networks and information and communication (ICT) infrastructure; and reinforce spatial planning quality and efficiency" (OECD, 2010: 240).

On closer inspection, it is clear that from them all, the ESDP was the EU Document which had the highest influence, since it became a strategic reference to the territorial development of Europe (Ferrão, 2010:81), while allowing the incorporation of the territorial component in the EU sectorial policies, and the reinforcement of the spatial planning component in the national policies (Costa, 2005).

Synthetically, the following tables present a crossing between the Common Strategic Frameworks (CSF) and the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) main strategic axes, and the influence degree of some EU selected documents in each one of them. As expected, the stronger the relation, the higher the national response to the EU spatial planning strategies within the EU Cohesion Policy strategies, in Portugal. To reach our conclusions on these crossings, we had to read with care the goals related with each one of the selected strategic axes, in order to detect their degree of relation with the analysed EU document main strategic spatial planning proposals.

Starting with the ESDP, a careful analysis of each one of the main priorities in the four EU Cohesion Policy programming cycles, in Portugal, shows a clear relation with the main objectives of this document of promoting: a Polycentric Development, Socioeconomic Equity, and the protection of the Heritage/Environment. It is needless to say that this relation had to be analysed in a broad sense, since the ESDP was only released in 1999. For instance, it was understood that the achieving of a more polycentric goal requires a better connected territory. Hence priorities related with the infrastructural domain, and in particular in the accessibilities improvement, were related with this ESDP goal (Table 3).

Curiously, it was only in the present programming cycle (NSRF - 2007-2013), that the concept of polycentrism was included in the approved strategic guidelines, within the general vision on strengthening the “territorial and environmental cohesion as factors enhancing competitiveness and sustainable development, by: (i) promoting more sustainable use of natural resources and reducing environmental impacts; (ii) promoting energy efficiency; (iii) improving territorial planning and the efficiency of planning instruments; (iv) **promoting a polycentric urban system** and the growing integration of the cities and country into supranational areas; (v) improving transport mobility and exploring logistics opportunities (MAOTDR, 2007: 21). Yet, we have to recognize a similar intention in the previous programming cycle (CSF III – 2000-2006) strategic document, since it advocated the urgency in correcting the regional asymmetries, by improving the territorial reorganization, and by reinforcing the role of the medium-size cities (MP, 1999: 35).

Table 3 – Relation between the programming cycles Axes and ESDP Principles

| Programming Cycles   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|
| CSF I (1989-1993)  | A | B | C |
| 1 – Creation of economic infra-structures                              |   |   |   |
| 2 – Support to productive investment and to infrastructures            |   |   |   |
| 3 – Develop human resources  |   |   |   |
| 4 – Promotion of competitiveness, agriculture and rural development    |   |   |   |
| 5 – Industrial restructuring, and conversion                           |   |   |   |
| 6 – Development of potentialities and regional growth                  |   |   |   |
| CSF II (1994-1999)   | A | B | C |
| 1 – Qualify human resources and employment                             |   |   |   |
| 2 – Reinforce economic competitive factors                             |   |   |   |
| 3 – Promote quality of life and social cohesion                        |   |   |   |
| 4 – Strengthen the regional economic base                              |   |   |   |
| CSF III (2000-2006)  | A | B | C |
| 1 – Elevate qualification levels, employment and social cohesion       |   |   |   |
| 2 – Change the production profile towards the activities of the future |   |   |   |
| 3 – Strengthen the geo-economic position and the territorial value     |   |   |   |
| 4 – Promote regional sustainable development and national cohesion     |   |   |   |
| NSRF (2007-2013)   | A | B | C |
| 1 – Human Potential Agenda   |   |   |   |
| 2 – Competitive Factors Agenda   |   |   |   |
| 3 – Territory Valorisation Agenda                                      |   |   |   |
| 4 – Regional Programmes  |   |   |   |

A – Polycentric Development; B – Socioeconomic Equity; C – Heritage and Environment

Impact: Strong - ■ ; Average - ■ ; Weak - □

Source: Data (MPAT, 1995; MPAT, 1993; MP, 1999; MAOTDR, 2007; EC, 1999) – Author's Compilation

Concerning the remaining two ESDP objectives in promoting socioeconomic equity and protecting the environment, several related programming cycles priorities can be seen, namely in elevating the human capital, the economic competitiveness and the promotion of sustainable development. In fact, these goals were largely present in the Lisbon and 2020 EU strategies, and were particularly invoked in the latter (NSRF 2007-2013) programming cycle strategy (MAOTDR, 2007). Nevertheless, their presence was also visible in the previous ones, due to the Portuguese needs in: (i) qualifying human resources; (ii) increasing economic competitiveness and (iii), promoting environmental protection measures (Table 4).

Table 4 – Relation between the programming cycles Axes and Lisbon and the Europe 2020 EU Strategies

| Programming Cycles   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|
| CSF I (1989-1993)  | A | B | C |
| 1 – Creation of economic infra-structures                              |   |   |   |
| 2 – Support to productive investment and to infrastructures            |   |   |   |
| 3 – Develop human resources  |   |   |   |
| 4 – Promotion of competitiveness, agriculture and rural development    |   |   |   |
| 5 – Industrial restructuring, and conversion                           |   |   |   |
| 6 – Development of potentialities and regional growth                  |   |   |   |
| CSF II (1994-1999)   | A | B | C |
| 1 – Qualify human resources and employment                             |   |   |   |
| 2 – Reinforce economic competitive factors                             |   |   |   |
| 3 – Promote quality of life and social cohesion                        |   |   |   |
| 4 – Strengthen the regional economic base                              |   |   |   |
| CSF III (2000-2006)  | A | B | C |
| 1 – Elevate qualification levels, employment and social cohesion       |   |   |   |
| 2 – Change the production profile towards the activities of the future |   |   |   |
| 3 – Strengthen the geo-economic position and the territorial value     |   |   |   |
| 4 – Promote regional sustainable development and national cohesion     |   |   |   |
| NSRF (2007-2013)   | A | B | C |
| 1 – Human Potential Agenda   |   |   |   |
| 2 – Competitive Factors Agenda   |   |   |   |
| 3 – Territory Valorisation Agenda                                      |   |   |   |
| 4 – Regional Programmes  |   |   |   |

A – Innovation; B – Sustainability; C – Inclusion

Impact: Strong - ■ ; Average - ■ ; Weak - □

Source: Data (MPAT, 1995; MPAT, 1993; MP, 1999; MAOTDR, 2007; EC, 2010b; EC, 2006) – Author's Compilation

Finally, the influences of the Territorial Agendas' (EC, 2007, 2011) main goals of promoting a more polycentric and balanced territorial development, a more integrated territory, and a better management of ecologic values were less influential in the design of the EU Cohesion Policy strategies in Portugal (Table 5). For one, these Agendas are relatively recent, and also quite specific in terms of their main goals. This specificity brings to light the territorial dimension of policies, which was regarded essentially in the design of the 'Territory Valorization Agenda' of the latest programming cycle (2007-2013), in Portugal.

Table 5 – Relation between the programming cycles Axes and the Territorial Agendas

| Programming Cycles   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|
| CSF I (1989-1993)  | A | B | C |
| 1 – Creation of economic infra-structures                              |   |   |   |
| 2 – Support to productive investment and to infrastructures            |   |   |   |
| 3 – Develop human resources  |   |   |   |
| 4 – Promotion of competitiveness, agriculture and rural development    |   |   |   |
| 5 – Industrial restructuring, and conversion                           |   |   |   |
| 6 – Development of potentialities and regional growth                  |   |   |   |
| CSF II (1994-1999)   | A | B | C |
| 1 – Qualify human resources and employment                             |   |   |   |
| 2 – Reinforce economic competitive factors                             |   |   |   |
| 3 – Promote quality of life and social cohesion                        |   |   |   |
| 4 – Strengthen the regional economic base                              |   |   |   |
| CSF III (2000-2006)  | A | B | C |
| 1 – Elevate qualification levels, employment and social cohesion       |   |   |   |
| 2 – Change the production profile towards the activities of the future |   |   |   |
| 3 – Strengthen the geo-economic position and the territorial value     |   |   |   |
| 4 – Promote regional sustainable development and national cohesion     |   |   |   |
| NSRF (2007-2013)   | A | B | C |
| 1 – Human Potential Agenda   |   |   |   |
| 2 – Competitive Factors Agenda   |   |   |   |
| 3 – Territory Valorisation Agenda                                      |   |   |   |
| 4 – Regional Programmes  |   |   |   |

A – Polycentric Development; B – Territorial Integration; C – Ecological values

Impact: Strong - ■ ; Average - ■ ; Weak - □

Source: Data (MPAT, 1995; MPAT, 1993; MP, 1999; MAOTDR, 2007; EC, 2007; EC, 2011) – Author's Compilation

In overall terms, the reading from the above tables show a visible and clear domestic (Portuguese) response to the EU mainstream spatial planning documents, in shaping the EU Cohesion Policy main intervention axes. Concretely, when it comes to the response in this specific area (spatial planning), which we can denominate by a 'EU-planization process', we can detect, at the strategic design level, a notable transformation towards the EU rational and vision presented, namely, in the ESDP and the Territorial Agendas. Specifically, from the first CSF (1989-1993) to the latter EU Cohesion Policy programming cycle (NSRF – 2007-2013) strategic guidelines, it is possible to detect a quite perceptible transformation of the initial preferences and strategic goals, which were replaced by the ongoing EU pivotal goals of promoting a smart, inclusive and sustainable development. Moreover, the notions of polycentrism, harmonious development and territorial cohesion are present along the NSRS guidelines, unlike what happed in the first Portuguese CSF.

But the question remains: did this visible transformation of the Portuguese EU Cohesion Policy Programming Cycles had any tangible results in achieving the EU goals of a more cohesive, harmonious, and polycentric Portuguese territory, over the last couple of decades? In truth, when it comes to turn the strategic guidelines related specifically with spatial planning at the national and regional levels, into concrete and tangible results, we come to realize that the EU funds clearly failed to reach these overall targets, in Portugal (see Medeiros, 2013a, 2013b).

## **5. ESPON evidences in changing territorial planning processes in Portugal**

It goes without saying that it is not an easy task to verify the ESPON evidences in changing territorial planning processes in Portugal, mainly because ESPON reports cover a wide range of territorial-related issues. Hence, we decided to narrow our analysis to the first ESPON phase (2002-2006), and in particular, in the Thematic and Policy Impact produced reports. Even so, they account for 21 reports and cover a vast range of subjects, from polycentricity to natural hazards (Table 6).

At first, we took a detailed look at all of these reports, in order to check the Portuguese presence in: (i) their elaboration, (ii) their territorial analysis, and (iii) their possible influence in the Portuguese Spatial Policies. Secondly, we related them with the Portuguese Spatial Policy Programme (PNPOT) design and main targets, since the Regional Spatial Programmes largely depend on it. The reason we did not regard the present ESPON phase (2007-2013) is because they could not have had any influence whatsoever in the Portuguese Spatial Policy Programme.

Table 6 – Relation between ESPON 2006 Thematic and Policy Impact Projects and Portugal

| Thematic                           | A | B | C | Policy Impact                  | A | B | C |
|------------------------------------|---|---|---|--------------------------------|---|---|---|
| 1.1.1 Polycentricity               |   |   |   | 2.1.1 Transport Policy Impact  |   |   |   |
| 1.1.2 Urban-Rural                  |   |   |   | 2.1.2 R&D Policy Impact        |   |   |   |
| 1.1.3 Enlargement and Polycentrism |   |   |   | 2.1.3 CAO Impact               |   |   |   |
| 1.1.4 Demographic Trends           |   |   |   | 2.1.4 Energy                   |   |   |   |
| 1.2.1 Transport Trends             |   |   |   | 2.1.5 Fisheries                |   |   |   |
| 1.2.2 Telecom Trends               |   |   |   | 2.2.1 Structural Funds Impact  |   |   |   |
| 1.2.3 Information Society          |   |   |   | 2.2.2 Pre-Accession Aid        |   |   |   |
| 1.3.1 Natural Hazards              |   |   |   | 2.2.3 Structural Funds - Urban |   |   |   |
| 1.3.2 Natural Heritage             |   |   |   | 2.3.1 ESDP Impact              |   |   |   |
| 1.3.3 Cultural Heritage            |   |   |   | 2.3.2 Governance               |   |   |   |
|                                    |   |   |   | 2.4.1 Environment              |   |   |   |

A – Portuguese Research Team Participation; B – Portuguese Territory analysed (not only from an EU perspective); C – Degree of influence in Portuguese Territorial Planning Processes

As can be seen from the Table 6 reading, the Portuguese participation in the analysed ESPON reports was largely relevant, taking in consideration the Portuguese relative dimension and presence in the EU. Furthermore, quite a lot of these reports either used Portuguese study-cases, or had an in-depth analysis of the Portuguese territory in studied theme. Yet, in our view, in most cases, their influence on the Portuguese policies is far from the desired one. Here, the exception might come from the inclusion of the polycentricity concept in some spatial planning policies, both at the national and the regional level.

However, this influence goes way back to the release of the ESDP. Indeed, when it comes to the influence of this document in Portugal, an ESPON report concludes that the awareness of its contents amongst professionals is quite strong at the national level, whilst at the regional level this level of awareness is much less relevant, and absent at the local level. The same report states that “in Portugal, the Portuguese National Administration organised seminars of which each of the five administrative regions, as well as the Azores and Madeira, attended. These regional events were also attended by members of each Regional coordination Commission and by a selection of regional, economic, academic, and political actors. Participation in INTERREG programmes is also a source of dissemination for the ESDP document” (ESPON 2.3.1, 2006: 153).

A more detailed analysis of the Portuguese Spatial Policy Programme’s main strategic options confirms the broad ESDP influence in its design. In concrete terms, the ESDP view of a more polycentric urban system is widespread in these options (Table 7). In similar vein, the ESDP and the ESPON are mentioned in this strategic document. However, concerning

the latter, it only made a direct use of cartography and conclusions from the Transport Policy Impact report (ESPON, 1.2.1, 2006), and the ESPON database.

Table 7 –National Spatial Policy Programme (PNPOT) main strategic options

|   |
|---|
| <b>1 – A well-planned and sustainable space</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Preserve the environment and the heritage</li> <li>- Manage and valorize the protected areas</li> <li>- Articulate the open space system with the urban system and the infra-structures' networks</li> <li>- Structure the urban conurbations in order to counteract the continuous urbanization</li> </ul>          |
| <b>2 – A competitive, integrated and open economy</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reinforce the territorial integration through a polycentric organization of the urban system</li> <li>- Valorize the strategic role of consolidated and emerging poles of touristic development</li> <li>- Develop networks of international connectivity</li> <li>- Structure sub-regional urban systems</li> </ul> |
| <b>3 – A fair territory in terms of development and well-being</b>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Define the urban system as a guiding criteria of designing accessibilities</li> <li>- Promote cities' networks and local polycentric urban-sub systems</li> <li>- Valorize the diversity of territories and the articulation of urban centres with rural areas</li> </ul>  |

Source: Data (DGOTDU, 2007) – Author's Compilation

Nevertheless, we find it useful to relate the relation between the Portuguese Spatial Policy Programme and the EU Cohesion Policy Programming cycles in Portugal, in order to see if the latter (NSRF 2007-2013) followed a spatial planning strategic approach more closely. And, in fact, we must recognize that both the Territory Valorization Agenda (QREN, 2008) and the Regional Operational Programmes (QREN 2008b,c,d,e,f) intervention strategies intend to follow the Portuguese Spatial Policy Programme main guidelines closely (Table 8).

In synthesis, when it comes to evaluating the evidences of the ESPON in changing territorial planning processes in Portugal, firstly we have to understand that this Programme only started in 2002, and while the Portuguese participation, in the concluded studies, is far from a modest one, the Portuguese influence on the theoretical background of some to the mainstream ESPON reports - namely the ones which analysed the concepts of Polycentricity and the Territorial Impact Assessment, and the Climate Change thematic - is also not very strong. Secondly, the ESPON Programme is still a very much 'academic nutshell', with little rotation amongst the European Research Centres.



Table 8 – Relation between the programming cycles Axes and the National Spatial Policy Programme Strategy (PNPOT)

| Programming Cycles   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|
| CSF I (1989-1993)  | A | B | C |
| 1 – Creation of economic infra-structures                              |   |   |   |
| 2 – Support to productive investment and to infrastructures            |   |   |   |
| 3 – Develop human resources  |   |   |   |
| 4 – Promotion of competitiveness, agriculture and rural development    |   |   |   |
| 5 – Industrial restructuring, and conversion                           |   |   |   |
| 6 – Development of potentialities and regional growth                  |   |   |   |
| CSF II (1994-1999)   | A | B | C |
| 1 – Qualify human resources and employment                             |   |   |   |
| 2 – Reinforce economic competitive factors                             |   |   |   |
| 3 – Promote quality of life and social cohesion                        |   |   |   |
| 4 – Strengthen the regional economic base                              |   |   |   |
| CSF III (2000-2006)  | A | B | C |
| 1 – Elevate qualification levels, employment and social cohesion       |   |   |   |
| 2 – Change the production profile towards the activities of the future |   |   |   |
| 3 – Strengthen the geo-economic position and the territorial value     |   |   |   |
| 4 – Promote regional sustainable development and national cohesion     |   |   |   |
| NSRF (2007-2013)   | A | B | C |
| 1 – Human Potential Agenda   |   |   |   |
| 2 – Competitive Factors Agenda   |   |   |   |
| 3 – Territory Valorisation Agenda                                      |   |   |   |
| 4 – Regional Programmes  |   |   |   |

A – Sustainable and Planned Space; B – Competitive Economy; C – Balanced Territory

Impact: Strong - ■ ; Average - ■ ; Weak - □

Source: Data (MPAT, 1995; MPAT, 1993; MP, 1999; MAOTDR, 2007; DGOTDU, 2007) – Author Compilation

Put differently, with some exceptions, the knowledge of the research being carried out within the ESPON Programme is not having the necessary and expected 'diffusion' within the national and local administration levels of the Portuguese government. On the plus side, the regional commissions for the regional development (Comissões de Desenvolvimento Regional – in Portuguese), are more aware of the produced work in the ESPON Programme, mainly because of the quality of their technical staff working on regional development issues. Ultimately, this awareness will help to transmit the main findings in the ESPON Reports when designing the Regional Development Plans.

## 6. Conclusion

The Europeanization process is a widely studied concept, as the influence of the European Union policies in many fields of EU and Non-EU States governance process has widespread exponentially, in the last decades. This process has also affected spatial planning processes and the design of territorial development strategies, in many (if not all) EU Member-States (including Portugal), namely through the inclusion of some mainstream goals expressed in the ESDP, the Territorial Agendas and in some ESPON reports.

In concrete terms, our analysis confirmed a widespread inclusion of some key-ESDP principles in the Portuguese Spatial Policy Programme (PNPOT), which also made use of some information included in an ESPON report and the ESPON database. A paramount example of this influence is the recurrent use of the goal of developing a more polycentric urban system, which was proposed in the ESDP, and further development in some ESPON reports.

The correlative analysis of the implemented EU Cohesion Policy strategies, with the ESDP principles, the Lisbon and the EU 2020 strategies, and the Territorial Agendas, in Portugal, also showed a great deal of concern from the Portuguese public authorities, in following and implementing the EU guidelines present in those documents. More specifically, the latter programming cycle (NSRF 2007-2013) was particularly keen in following the ESDP principles of supporting a more sustainable and balanced spatial structure, in order to counteract the excessive concentration of the urban agglomerations in the littoral area, in Portugal.

These changes were profound at the strategic design level, in the last couple of decades. As such, we can speak of high degree of domestic change (transformation) in the national spatial planning policies, practices and preferences, which replaced older ones, taken on account the Börzel and Risse (2003) domestic response to the EU policies proposed typology. However, the concretization of the EU spatial planning pivotal goals of promoting a more harmonious, cohesive and polycentric territory, is far from being achieved in Portugal. On the contrary, over the last 25 years, the Portuguese territory experience a growing process of ‘monocentrism’, due to the expanding influence of the national capital (Lisbon) both in the socioeconomic domain, and in the demographic one.

Finally, it was possible to conclude that the Portuguese role in the elaboration of the ESPON reports was quite relevant, and that the awareness of the spatial planners and other experts at the national level is also high, although it diminishes quite dramatically from the national into the local administrative level. This is a sign to worry about, since the sound implementation of a spatial plan requires a top-down and bottom-up mixed approach. Likewise, it is still difficult to assess the ESPON evidences in changing the territorial processes in Portugal, even within the EU Cohesion policy strategies, as this is a quite recent Programme.

Even so, it is undeniable that some key national and regional Portuguese entities, (national and regional) are well aware of what is being produced in the ESPON. However, the lack of regional political autonomy, alongside with the lack of economic and financial capacity and independence and, most of all, the absence of a clear, sustainable and strategic vision to the Portuguese territorial development at the medium and long-term, undermines a lot of the positive work, which was already done on the design of many programmes and spatial policies.

On a positive note, in Portugal, the academic community which studies issues related with spatial planning has shown a close connection with what is being produced in the EU arena, in the field of spatial planning. Quite interesting and useful partnerships have been forged amongst Portuguese and other European Research Institutes in this academic field, namely within the ESPON Programme. This has had crucial implications, not only in the increasing absorption of EU practices and discourses - in the design of the National Spatial Planning Strategies (PNPOT) and the more recent EU Cohesion Policy Operational Programmes (2007-2013) - but also in the accommodation, adoption, and transformation of these practices, visions, preferences, at least at the strategic policies' design phase. The put in practice of these spatial visions and strategies is a much different story, as it requires a further step in the country's social innovation, and more awareness on the usefulness of spatial planning processes to achieve a more developed country.

## 7. Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank two reviewers for their insightful comments and suggestions to improve the paper. Further, we thank a valuable English revision from Graça Rønning.

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