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Territorial Scenarios and Visions of Europe for 2050: Proceedings of the Workshop of the incoming Luxembourg EU Presidency on 23 April 2015

27 July, 2015

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Executive Summary

This report provides a brief account of the workshop "Territorial Scenarios and Visions of Europe for 2050" organised by the incoming Luxembourg EU Presidency on 23 April 2015. The aim of this workshop was to provide new impetus to debates around the territorial future of Europe. The workshop explored the potentials for a political debate on scenarios and visions. Several examples of scenarios and visions were presented as showcases, thereby illustrating access points for further debates on scenario and vision processes.

Scenarios

Scenarios are a plausible description of how the future might develop, based on a coherent and internally consistent set of assumptions ('scenario logic') about the key relationships and driving forces. (based on Carpenter et al. 2005)

A wide range of scenario techniques and approaches to scenario building currently exist. Relating specifically to territorial scenarios, some are of a quantitative nature and apply statistical modelling techniques while others are more qualitative in nature combining descriptive evidence with quantitative data. Scenarios, moreover, differ with regard to the question of uncertainty and how they deal with it, the sources used as the evidence base and their geographical as well as thematic coverage.

The scenarios developed for the European territory, or parts thereof, thus far highlight various ongoing challenges in Europe, such as growing disparities, euroscepticism or the important role of global markets for European territorial development. All of these need to be addressed by policy-makers at all territorial levels. In addition, there are also a number of cross-cutting issues that are relevant here, such as the future of the European Structural and Investment Funds and Cohesion Policy, the future development of the EU 2020 strategy and related sector policies, and the relationship between the EU and its neighbourhood.

Policy-makers at all levels and covering different sector policies can thus be relevant addressees of scenarios, from local and regional players to European institutions and from sector policies to neighbourhood countries. It is important to aim for tailor-made scenarios and to involve the relevant experts and policy-makers in the production and/or use of the scenarios.

The range of possible outcomes of scenarios proposed is as wide as the range of techniques and target groups used. Scenarios can be used as an information source that provides further insight to complex topics. By discussing the scenarios, new and in-depth knowledge is created. In this way they can function as an eye-opener and help to change ingrained mindsets. By illustrating linkages between different levels and sectors, they can be used to break down and translate complexity. Alternative scenarios also help to compare developments and analyse and understand the advantages as well as the disadvantages of policy decisions. Hence, they can be a useful tool in policy impact assessment. Finally, scenarios encourage creativity as they illustrate the possibilities inherent in alternative developments.

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Visions

Visions define a desirable picture of the future. This picture is based on a core set of ideas, values and principles. Other terms also used to describe similar long-term pictures of desirable futures are 'perspectives' or 'strategies'. However, perspectives and strategies have a stronger focus on steps towards a desirable future, whereas 'visions' often only describe the picture without much explanation of how to actually achieve it.

Territorial visions provide a means to promote debates about long-term future objectives. They can help, for instance, to formulate and illustrate an ideal situation of well-being and living conditions for a territory's population. A European territorial vision process can then raise and answer the question, where do we want to be in 2050. In this way they can also help to clarify perceptions about which vision may be more desirable than the others and create awareness about the need to make decisions now in order to transform the idea of the desirable future into a real possibility in the long term.

Territorial visions focus on territorial features such as polycentricity, urban structures or territorial imbalances. The issues and policy fields addressed in European visioning processes concentrate in the main on themes for which trans-national cooperation provides clear added value, such as new challenges with a global dimension, territorial networking and inter-regional relations, transnational mobility and planning or territorial disparities in socio-economic developments.

To translate the relevant aim into different territories or types of territories, it is key to identify the issues that are common to all parts of the territory under consideration and address the concerns shared by the people concerned. This may often lead to questions over how to achieve a balance between growth and cohesion, how to balance competing political interests, how to achieve macro-economic balance and sustainable growth, how to achieve equity with a high level of employment, or how to balance economic interest with ecological concerns.

The target groups of visions are the same as that for scenarios. A vision process in comparison to a scenario process is, however, much more focused on finding a common understanding among potential players about what is desirable in terms of how the future should look.

Vision processes provide a platform from which to find a common understanding of a territory's future. Visioning processes promote awareness of common challenges, interests and objectives. Especially in cross-border areas, cooperation that goes beyond national interests can give rise to fruitful processes which enhance European integration in the long-term. Territorial visions can also be used to promote the territorial dimension in sector policies. Pilot projects and common actions are important outputs of any vision process striving to realise its vision.

Conclusions

Both scenarios and visions – as territorial outlines of the future – can enrich policy processes and help them to become more effective and efficient by reflecting the territorial diversity of future developments. The choice between scenarios and visions depends on their purpose. Scenarios are

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most useful when considering whether policies or specific measures are fit for the future with regard to the territorial diversity of expected developments. Visions, on the other hand, are likely to be more useful when discussing whether a policy or specific measure is likely to contribute to developments leading to a desired territorial pattern in Europe.

To be useful, scenarios and visions need to address the key themes of the main political initiatives in Europe. Furthermore, policy-makers at various governance levels need to encourage the use of such scenarios, visioning and their mapping to discuss the territorial dimension of policy initiatives and foster a better understanding how territorially blind policies can benefit from making the best use of the diversity of territorial development potentials. The upcoming discussions related to the European Investment Plan ('Juncker Plan'), the review of the Europe 2020 strategy, the Energy Union, the Digital Agenda, or the preparation for the next funding period ESIF 2020+ may be of particular interest here.

Other policy developments can also benefit from a better understanding of how they link into expected and/or desirable territorial developments in Europe. Here, scenarios and visions may function as eye openers and facilitate effective and efficient policy development making the best use of the territorial diversity across Europe.

Further effort is however required to provide just-in-time and tailor-made evidence while at the same time increasing its insight into the specific rationales of various sector policies and their territorial dimensions in order to deliver the results effectively to the relevant decision-makers.

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1 Introduction

The workshop "Territorial Scenarios and Visions of Europe for 2050" organised by the incoming Luxembourg EU Presidency on 23 April 2015 is a first step towards providing new impetus to debates around the territorial future of Europe. The workshop explored the potentials for a political debate on scenarios and visions. Several examples of scenarios and visions were presented as showcases, thereby illustrating access points for further debates on scenario and vision processes. This report provides a brief account of the workshop but it is important to begin by outlining why this subject was chosen for further study.

Since the 1990s, the territorial future of Europe has been discussed at various times. This is reflected in the adoption of the *European Spatial Development Perspective* (ESDP) in 1999, of the *Territorial Agenda of the EU* in 2007 and of the latter's update, the *Territorial Agenda 2020*, in 2011. These discussions are also linked to the broadening of EU cohesion objectives with the inclusion of the territorial dimension in the Lisbon Treaty.

These and other discussions have inspired the scientific and the political communities to develop perspectives on European territorial development. The ESPON and Interreg programmes may be considered as the core of such activities, enriched by national and regional discussions on territorial development.

Nevertheless, enthusiasm for territorial cohesion and solidarity within the EU is now cooling as demands for renationalisation become stronger. In light of the economic crisis, discussion increasingly focuses on securing standards rather than advancing European integration with the costs and difficulties of EU membership more frequently discussed than its added value.

In consequence, the concept of territorial cohesion is no longer at the centre of debates although territorial development is essential for the economic and social well-being of communities. This makes it important to understand the strengths and weaknesses of regions, as seen in a wider territorial context. On the other hand, the concept of territorial cohesion has experienced something of a renaissance in the context of the sectoral approach of the ESIF.

Furthermore, in the wake of the economic and financial crises political debates have become increasingly short-term oriented and focused on single investment projects, thus often disregarding long-term and more comprehensive development approaches.

Still, there is a need for long-term considerations not least for calibrating policymaking and reducing the costs of the non-coordination of sector policies. This is why it is important to draw attention to discussions on long-term territorial objectives. In order to do so, it may be necessary to make the territorial cohesion objective more operational. In the past different views have existed on how to visualise scenarios and visions. The limited attention given to this subject needs then to be turned into new debates on the visualisation of the future of the EU and on concrete action plans on how to realise this.

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The difference between scenarios and visions may not always be clear as both may inform debates about future territorial development. As such, for the purpose of the workshop's proceedings, scenarios and visions should be understood as in the following definitions.

Scenarios are a plausible description of how the future might develop, based on a coherent and internally consistent set of assumptions ('scenario logic') about the key relationships and driving forces (based on Carpenter et al. 2005).

Visions define a desirable picture of the future. This picture is based on a core set of ideas, values and principles. Other terms also used to describe similar long-term pictures of desirable futures are 'perspectives' or 'strategies'. However, perspectives and strategies have a stronger focus on steps towards a desirable future, whereas 'visions' often only describe the picture without much explanation of how to actually achieve it.

Instead of providing summaries of each single presentation, this report attempts rather to highlight aspects that have been recurrent in the presentations and discussions. The two main topics are the evidence base for territorial scenarios (chapter 1) and the readiness for territorial visions (chapter 2). The scenario chapter summarises insights concerning the evidence base on which scenarios can be built as well as relevant issues and policy fields for scenarios, before reflecting on the target groups and scenario use. The visions chapter focuses on insights concerning the readiness of decision-makers to work with territorial visions. This includes discussions on relevant policy fields for territorial visions and addressees. The final chapter forwards some conclusions and argues that maps be more widely used when discussing territorial futures – for both scenarios and visions alike.

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2 European territorial scenarios

There are many approaches to foresight. Scenario techniques are one of them.[1] Scenarios are used to show possible futures that may be equally plausible and consistent based on a number of assumptions and a selection of independent variables. They may contain 'what if' explorations, for instance, for certain events or policy approaches. Scenarios are however neither predictions nor forecasts of the future. Their development or use shall be as objective as possible. Against these considerations the following definition based on Carpenter et al. 2005 summarises the understanding of scenarios as applied in this paper:

Scenarios are a plausible description of how the future might develop, based on a coherent and internally consistent set of assumptions ('scenario logic') about the key relationships and driving forces.

Making use of existing evidence, scenarios can generate inputs for future-oriented discussions. In the context of European territorial development such discussions can be used to create awareness about the potentials and challenges of the European territory, its cities and regions, and the possible impacts of sector policies. They can help to foster a more flexible mindset about the future and lay the ground for better decision-making. They can also be used as a tool for clarifying perceptions about alternative outcomes in the future that may be affected by decision-making in the present ("what do we need to do now in order to…"). In the end, scenarios are about choices, often of a political nature.

Raising awareness, promoting future-oriented discussions and improving decision-making becomes more important since the European population is living in an increasingly integrated world and is facing a host of political, economic, social, and environmental challenges.

Examples of territorial scenarios addressed at the workshop

For the **ESPON project Territorial Scenarios and Visions for Europe** (ET2050) three territorial scenarios were developed. The first one focuses on the European metropolises and is mainly based on the Europe 2020 Strategy. The second scenario follows the ideas of the ESDP 1999 thus promotes the development of second-tier cities and networks between them. The third scenario puts the focus on rural and less developed regions and responds to environmental challenges as expressed in the Territorial Agenda 2020.

PASHMINA (PAradigm SHifts Modelling and INnovative Approaches) was a foresight project conducted under the 7th Framework Programme from 2009 until 2012. The focus was put on plausible and desirable shifts of the overall socio-economic paradigm. The scenario space was structured by speed (do it fast vs. do it slow), and solidarity (do it alone vs. do it together). For the four scenarios resulting from this structure, implications on the transport-energy nexus and changes in the land-use were analysed.

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[1] Other frequently used methods e.g. are expert panels, futures workshops, brainstorming, SWOT analyses, questionnaires/surveys, trend extrapolations, interviews, environmental scanning and Delphi surveys.

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FLAGSHIP (Forward Looking Analysis of Grand Societal cHallenges and Innovative Policies) is a research project under the 7th Framework Programme (2013-2015) and focuses on transition pathways towards global sustainable well-being. In an iterative process, two opposing, yet plausible and (possibly) desirable storylines are developed. Global, wide-scoped storylines are translated into sector-specific scenarios and contexts and the governance-related implications are analysed.

The **Global Europe 2050** project was based upon an unstructured bottom-up approach for scenario building. By focusing on five macro-themes the potential alternative role of Europe on the international scene was analysed in three scenarios. The five macro-themes are geopolitics and governance; demography and society; territorial and mobility dynamics, energy, resources, environment and climate change; and economic and technological prospects.

Spatial Scenarios Austria 2030 was a project conducted by the Austrian Conference on Spatial Planning (ÖROK) from 2006 until 2009. Nine thematic fields, ranging from demography and tourism to the institutional framework and energy, were identified and four scenarios were developed for each field. Afterwards, the 36 thematic scenarios were merged into four integrated spatial scenarios: Overall Growth, Overall Competition, Overall Security, and Overall Risk.
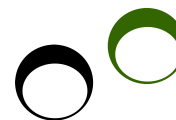
In the study **"Welfare, Prosperity and Quality of the Living Environment"** (WLO 2006) the long-term effects of current policies were assessed for the Netherlands. The combined impact of different trends was analysed for various aspects related to the natural and built environment, such as land use, transport, water safety and health. Based on this, four possible scenarios were identified, distinguished by their emphasis on international cooperation vs. national sovereignty and private vs. public responsibilities.

DG REGIO is setting up **a set of regional projections** that are linked to existing reference projections provided by DG ECFIN on economic indicators (GDP, productivity, employment; 2013-2060, NUTS-0 level) and by Eurostat on demographic development (population structure, migration, fertility, mortality; EUROPOP2013, NUTS-2 level). DG REGIO intends to further differentiate the regional breakdown (NUTS-3, LAU-2, grid) of these projections in order to show regional disparities and illustrate interaction between economic and demographic change as well as the degree of urbanisation and its change over time.

2.1 Variety of scenarios

There is a wide range of scenario techniques and different types of scenario building. In the field of territorial scenarios, some are of a quantitative nature and apply statistical modelling techniques. Others are of a more qualitative nature combining descriptive evidence with quantitative data. Both quantitative and qualitative scenarios may be depicted with the aid of maps. However, the latter often use more general and schematic visualisations that do not map the territory.

The variety of territorial scenarios is also reflected in the ways in which various scenario approaches deal with uncertainty, which sources they tap into, and their geographical as well as thematic coverage.

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Dealing with uncertainty

As scenarios are designed to develop possible perspectives for the future, they tend to involve a high level of uncertainty. In order to address this uncertainty many scenario works sketch different possible development paths. The number of paths that are developed and their characteristics can however differ substantially between scenario projects.

In cases where the most likely future should be illustrated, typically only one scenario is developed. Most often, however, several scenarios are developed for the same theme or territory. This results not only from the fact that it is often unclear what the most likely future is, but also from the popular preference for approaches that aim to illustrate contrarious development paths leading to different decisions. In the end, it does not matter whether one likely scenario or alternative scenarios are developed because both types of approaches need to have clear and consistent policy messages across sectors and levels in order to represent a valuable input for decision-making.

Evidence sources

Depending on the technique used, and the theme and territory in question, the evidence base of the scenarios can differ.

Quantitative scenarios, though often using a wide variety of indicators, are constrained by the restrictiveness of indicators. Some scenarios refer to single socio-economic indicators such as GDP growth, employment, productivity or various sub-sets of demographic indicators. In order to develop quantitative scenarios the possible development of these indicators is then modelled under different policy assumptions differentiating between certain territorial policy *foci*, for example the promotion of European metropolises, second-tier cities, or rural and less developed regions (ESPON ET2050). Furthermore, different models and techniques can be applied to develop forecasts for the selected indicators. In this way quantitative scenarios may provide reproducible visualisations of potential futures and may depict possible trends etc., more clearly than qualitative descriptions and illustrations.

The focus of qualitative scenarios is usually placed on selected themes. The scenarios assess territorial development in the light of the respective theme by mirroring different European developments. A common feature of these types of scenarios is that they integrate qualitative and quantitative methods and often apply participatory processes trying to bring on board 'soft' knowledge or anticipated developments. This allows them to render complexity visible. At the same time, the main challenge for qualitative scenarios is the development of unbiased and sound assumptions upon which the scenario can be based. Corresponding examples discussed at the workshop are FLAGSHIP and the Spatial Scenarios Austria 2030. In both approaches (statistically) observable trends were reviewed in participatory processes to identify plausible future paths of development.

Geographic coverage

Depending on the context under which scenarios are developed and their intended use, the geographical and thematic coverage varies.

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While scenarios developed under ESPON typically have a clear territorial dimension and Europe-wide coverage, other scenario works at the European level are often less comprehensive. Various projects funded under the European Research Framework Programme have developed scenarios on macro-themes by combining them with territorial elements and dimensions. They look either into selected themes in particular territories such as, for instance, the transport-energy-environment nexus in the urban context or land-use competition in the light of territorial functions (PASHMINA). The territorial dimension has been made even more explicit in this type of scenario by developing storylines about crucial societal challenges for global and territorial governance, thereby elaborating different future pathways. For the scenario development the storylines are discussed for different territorial contexts.

National territorial scenarios have also been developed in some European countries, such as the Netherlands and Austria. By definition, they do not cover the whole European territory but focus instead on the respective country's territorial development. These scenarios, more than those mentioned above, avoid mapping the territory. They are either inspired by the European approaches of ESPON and further differentiate the possible implications of megatrends and unexpected events (wild cards) within a Member State territory, or they develop qualitative thematic scenarios that illustrate alternative policy *foci*. These can be, for instance, diverging degrees of public vs. private interventions, different extents of internationalisation, climate change or economic growth, which in turn illustrate their likely effects on welfare, prosperity and the quality of living. In any case, they select thematic and/or policy *foci* that are of the utmost importance for the respective country.

Thematic coverage

Scenarios can focus on different thematic issues and policy fields while taking a territorial perspective. The focus naturally depends on the objective of the drafters and involved policymakers. Thus, given the complexity of territorial development, the variety of issues and policy fields covered by scenarios can be wide. It is difficult to single out a few issues or sector policies. In fact, what is considered to be important by policymakers depends on their perspective. It may, for example, be a more macro-economic perspective, or a regional-economic, environmental or social perspective. This defines what will be at the heart of the scenario. From a territorial point of view, however, the integration of different perspectives is essential.
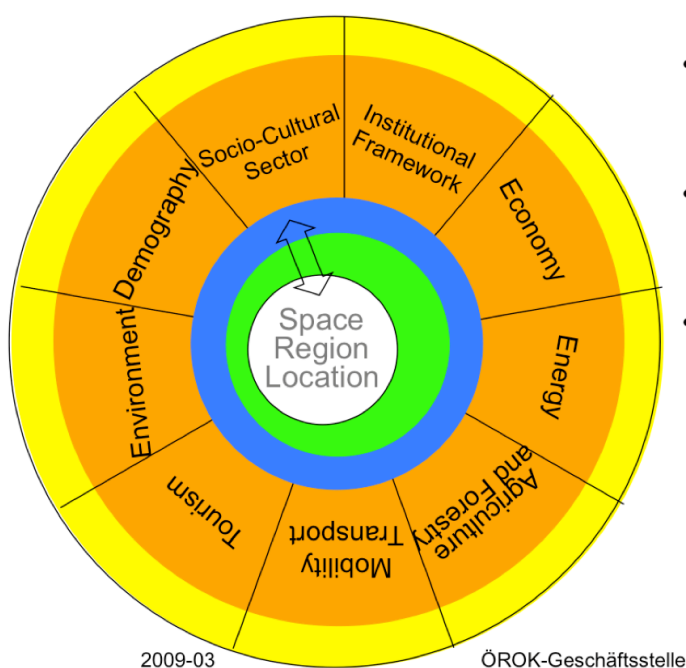
Scenarios that are oriented towards a specific sector are often less 'territorial' than those taking a more integrated perspective or focusing on specific territories. The example of the Austrian Spatial Planning Conference (ÖROK) illustrates the need to cover several sector policies in order to produce good territorial scenarios. This case also illustrates how to build the link between sector policies and territorial scenarios. By firstly developing thematic scenarios it was possible to convince sector policy representatives of a participatory scenario process. For each of the nine previously identified policy fields (see figure 1) four scenarios were developed. These 36 thematic scenarios were merged into four integrated scenarios, which were then translated into spatial scenarios that took into account additional external influences.

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Figure 1. ÖROK approach for scenario development

Source: Arbter 2015

2.2 Relevant issues and policy fields

The scenarios that have been developed so far for the European territory, or parts thereof, generally point to certain challenges. They highlight the existence of a number of structural challenges in Europe, such as growing disparities, from imbalances at the neighbourhood level to imbalances between regions and countries. These basic imbalances are likely to lead to social and political conflicts that need to be addressed by policymaking. Another field of challenges highlighted by the scenarios is the growing level of euroscepticism and the important role played by global markets in European territorial development. In other words, by drawing a picture of the future of the European territory, scenarios highlight upcoming thematic challenges that need to be addressed, on different territorial levels, today.

With regard to possible future European territorial scenario works, there are a number of cross-cutting issues that should be addressed by policy-makers:

- The future of the **European Territory regarding the EU 2020 strategy or the development of sector policies**. These types of issues are relevant in the context of the impact assessments of

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policy measures. Such analysis provides an interesting element with which to calibrate EU policy development in a long-term perspective.

- **The future of the ESIF.** In order to develop scenarios on the future of cohesion policies, and answer the question whether a new generation of cohesion policies is needed, it might be useful to bring players from different sector policies together, as illustrated by the Austrian example described above. Such an approach could combine scenario and vision building and may start from either side, i.e. by envisioning 'the perfect new generation of cohesion policies' and moving backwards to what is feasible or by moving forward and depicting different cohesion policy objectives and their likely effects on future territorial development. Considering the effect of different levels of ESI-funding, as in the ESPON ET2050 project, also highlights potential changes to future cohesion policy.

- **Functional areas.** Analyses of socio-economic and environmental challenges increasingly refer to functional areas. Scenarios of urban development beyond administrative units are considered to be an appropriate approach to illustrate emerging new territorial patterns in respect of issues such as density, mobility, social issues and new governance arrangements.

- **New phenomena.** The decentralisation of energy production, the re-naturalisation of urban areas, the development of alternative housing models, shared office-spaces and new producer-consumer relations are emerging phenomena that ask for a new perspective to be taken on cities and their functional areas. Thus, they represent new perspectives for territorial scenario building.

- **The EU and its neighbourhood.** As EU policies often fundamentally impact neighbouring countries, territorial scenarios may be used to link developments in the EU with its neighbourhood. Discussions about the future of the European territory may show the links with neighbouring countries or can enhance discussions on the implications of EU policies that are relevant for the neighbourhood.

- **Wildcards.** The above-listed issues can be complemented by so-called 'wildcard scenarios' that consider the effects and impacts to be expected from cross-cutting and unpredictable but not entirely implausible events. Examples here include abrupt climate change, the abolishment of the social security system or a globalisation crisis as discussed in the Scenario Project of the ESPON 2006 Programme. Even though the occurrence of a specific wildcard exactly in the way it may be developed in a scenario is highly unlikely, this type of scenario development is useful for raising awareness about the vulnerability of the European territory towards certain (external) events.

2.3 Addressees of the scenario work

In order to develop European territorial scenarios that are useful for the policy process at the centre of attention, it is important to aim for tailor-made scenarios and to involve the 'right' or relevant experts and policy makers producing and using the scenarios. Thus, it should be asked who is the target group, what are the characteristics of a scenario that make it a useful tool for them, and how will the target group want to use the scenarios.

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Target groups

Generally speaking, policymakers at all levels covering numerous different sector policies could be relevant addressees for the scenarios.

For the **European Commission** scenarios are particularly interesting if they provide either analytical knowledge or improve the process of impact assessments. The latter is also visible in the ESIF regulations for the 2014-2020 period which explicitly highlight the need for impact evaluations. Thus, scenarios based on territorial impact assessments can be a particularly useful tool for improving decision-making at the EU level.

Beyond that and especially when aiming to provide integrated territorial scenarios with a sound evidence base, it is important also to take **sector policies** on board. They need to be identified at the beginning of the scenario process to ensure that an approach is chosen that convinces them of the added value of the envisaged scenario process. Thus, more generally, even if the process aims, ultimately, to develop territorial scenarios it is nevertheless important to address people beyond the club of what could be termed, 'territorial specialists'. Furthermore, **local and regional players** need to be involved in scenario development. Depending on the vertical division of responsibilities they may not only know their territory best but may also be crucial in the implementation of different (sector) policies.

Finally, given the above-mentioned implications of EU policies for the EU neighbourhood, decision-makers from **neighbouring countries** may also be interested in potential EU territorial scenarios. In this case, they may primarily be considered as a source of information, which in turn may affect decision-making in the neighbouring countries and increase the transnational coordination of policies.

Scenarios for the policy process

There are several potential uses for scenarios in policy-making. They can generally be used at **all stages of the policy cycle** (see figure 2). Depending on the specific stage, scenarios may be used in different ways. By highlighting alternative developments scenarios can be used to define problems, question the mainstream and encourage creativity by explicitly requesting that policy-makers 'think outside the box'. They may also be used to keep decision-makers informed at several stages of the policy cycle. When it comes to the development of the policy design in particular the comparison of different policy alternatives with different (territorial) objectives can support decision-making and may induce a discussion about desirable futures and the exploration of different opportunities at the political level.

When implementing and evaluating policy actions favoured in the earlier phases of the policy cycle, scenarios can also be mirrored with real developments in order to improve future decision-making further. In most cases however foresight and scenario processes induce discussions about policy-making and represent a starting point for the policy process. Moreover, the development of robust policy recommendations is often considered useful and viewed as particularly important in highlighting the logical chains of 'what if' considerations.

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Another example of the policy use of scenarios is territorial impact assessments (TIA). By means of a participatory approach and a standardised procedure, TIA assesses how specific policies may affect the territory. Figure 3 shows how Territorial Impact Assessment is used to assess the regional exposure and sensitivity of selected topics in the FLAGSHIP project. As the quality of quantitative information was insufficient (either due to a lack of complete regional data sets or to missing information in the data sets), the first maps were complemented with qualitative information, internal discussion and expert knowledge in order to produce four indicative maps that served as one possible input for in-depth discussions on the European level and in various case study regions.

**Figure 2.   The use of scenarios in policy-making**

Source: Kok 2015

Although there are numerous potential addressees for scenarios, their use is impeded by various obstacles. The limited administrative capacity of many addressees is a specific obstacle that reduces their potential to engage in scenario processes and fully exploit the potential of existing scenarios in their decision-making. Limitations on administrative capacity may be particularly relevant when scenario development is built on complex models that do not allow the user to understand the logic behind the scenario and/or recommendation development. Furthermore, this illustrates that ownership from public authorities and politicians is crucial in order for them to be able to develop and use robust

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scenarios. This in turn can only be achieved if, firstly, the applied processes are participatory and convincing for the stakeholders and, secondly, where politicians can be induced to think beyond the electoral cycle.

Figure 3. TIA approach from the FLAGSHIP project (simplified representation)
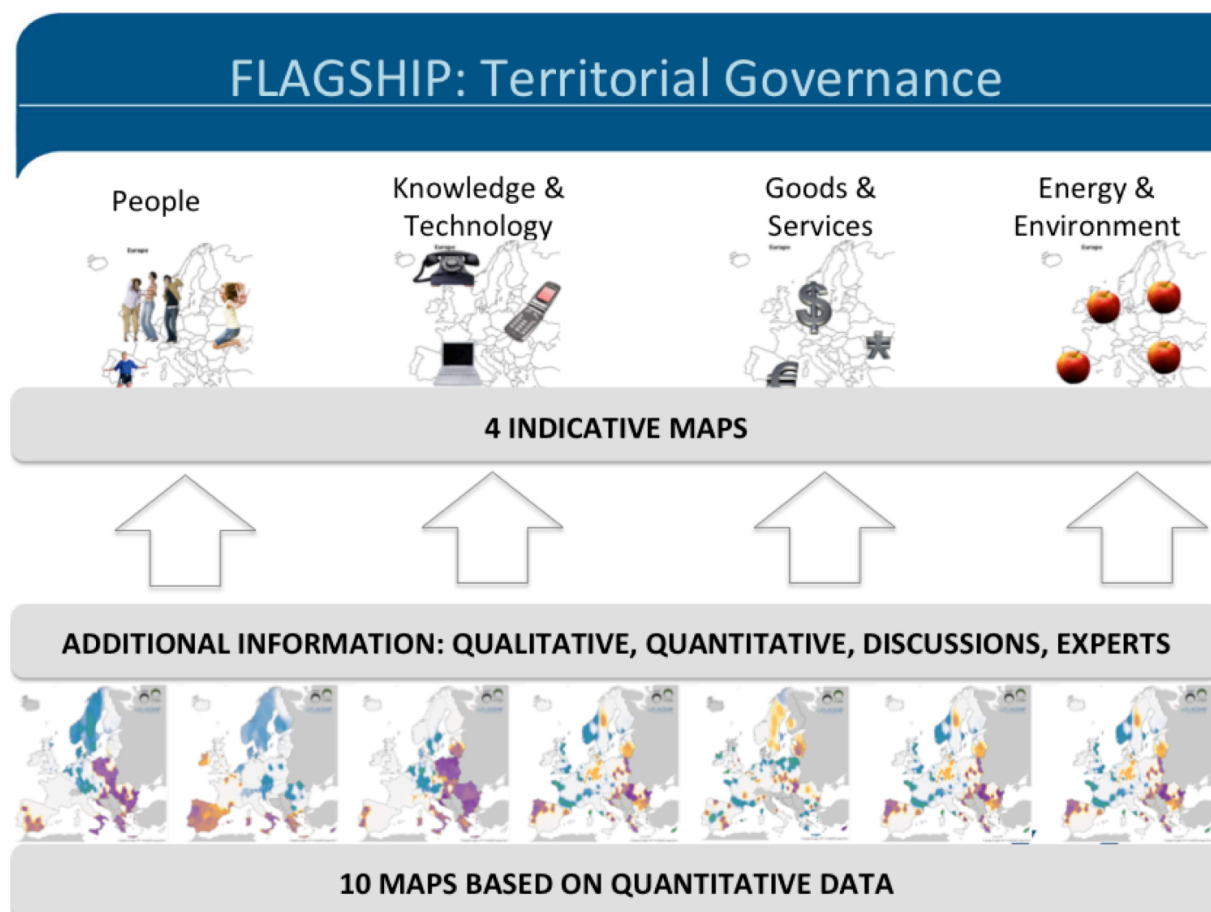
Source: Ricci 2015 (based on FLAGSHIP 2014)

2.4 Possible outcomes of scenario discussions

When it comes to their possible uses the role of scenarios as **information sources** was specifically mentioned. Scenarios can be developed as a basis for discussion on visions for different territorial aspects, for instance for different urban areas, networks or cooperation levels. This use may go beyond the mere role of providing information as it also supports decision-making more directly by providing **insights for decision-makers**.

As a next step, reading, interpreting and discussing scenarios creates **new and in-depth knowledge**. This new knowledge can in turn be used for different purposes such as inputs to cohesion reports or strategic papers or as background knowledge for risk management, where, for example, scenarios highlight the risk of particular territorial imbalances. Scenarios can also support a more detailed and

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in-depth understanding of territorial dynamics and address knowledge gaps when they are broken down from national to NUTS-2 and / or NUTS-3 levels.

Scenarios can function as an **eye-opener** as they can potentially help to change ingrained mindsets. In order to 'think outside the box', it is necessary to obtain new perspectives, e.g. how is European territorial development seen by other countries or continents, and what in turn does it imply for Europe. Such a discussion can then lead to different conclusions about these European perspectives.

Scenarios can also be used to **translate complexity** rendering complex information and developments more 'digestible' for, or 'tangible' to, decision-makers. Translation implies here an improved illustration of the complexity of integrated territorial development and linkages between territorial levels and sector policies, respectively.

Another possible outcome refers to **comparing developments** (see figure 4). It may be interesting for decision-makers, for instance, to compare scenarios later with actual developments. By conducting such a comparison the questions can be posed; why have scenario and reality diverged and what has developed differently to trigger this divergence in outcomes? This does not question the correctness of a scenario but helps to better understand which assumptions or framework conditions have changed thus enabling appropriate conclusions to be drawn.
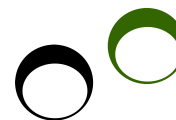
Figure 4.   Exploratory scenarios of the ESPON ET2050 project

Source: Ulied 2015 (based on ESPON ET2050)

If alternative scenarios are developed for different policy objectives their results may show that alternative policy assumptions and options can **each have their own advantages and disadvantages**, which confirms that there is not always an optimal solution. In this context, experience from Finland suggests that, based on local level data, it was difficult to achieve a consensus on a national level objective. Different territorial levels often promote different territorial objectives which may not always be compatible. Having such a discussion does however help to clarify the various perspectives and can support the promotion of a better level of understanding between decision-makers located at different governance levels.

Apart from improving the knowledge base or reducing knowledge gaps, scenarios can also be used to facilitate **policy impact assessments**. If scenarios are developed to compare different policy

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alternatives, they can stimulate the debate about possible and desirable futures on territorially relevant aspects as indicated by the above-mentioned example of Finland.

By illustrating alternative developments, scenarios as such are useful in that they **encourage creativity** in respect of possible policy options, thus widening the scope of feasible policies. This may in the long-run support a change in the mindsets of policymakers. Finally, particularly in respect of territorial cohesion, territorial scenarios can be used to provide momentum for discussions on the territorial cohesion objective and on how to better operationalise it.

2.5 What can be learned from past scenario experiences?

The aforementioned variety of available scenario experiences allows us to draw a number of lessons from this previous work:

- Even though there are various territorial scenarios for Europe, more scenario work might be beneficial as every scenario is context-dependent and often the actual process of developing scenarios is more informative in terms of policy processes than the final result.
- Although scenarios are an analytical tool and should therefore be objective, it is often difficult to avoid bias. They can only strive to be as objective as possible. Similarly, other scenario prerequisites, for example, that they are not used as forecasts, do not always hold in practice.
- Scenario building is complex and in some cases difficult to realise affecting opportunities for further use.
- Policy-making experiences suggest that the number of alternative scenarios should not be too high. If the number is too high, they likely will not be suitable for decision-making.
- In policy-making, scenario-building can be seen to have a political dimension.
- Many policy-makers hesitate to work with scenarios that are depicted in maps. If visualised or described by other means, scenarios are however likely to be a useful tool providing objective insight into policy debates.
- For a scenario process to be useful, it is important to create ownership among all players and levels that may be relevant for the envisaged scenario process. While being driven by experts, for instance from within spatial planning, participatory processes support (political) ownership. This in turn ensures different perspectives are included and that policy-makers are aware of the various decision-making processes.
- Territorial scenarios still lack access to comparative data at the regional, local and sub-local levels. This hampers the development of quantitative scenarios for some topics such as urbanisation. Improving databases with this type of information will further support the evidence base for scenarios.
- Another factor hampering the use of scenarios is the lack of long-term engagement by policy-makers. Their mindset is focused on the electoral cycle, which rarely attributes any real value to the long-term strategic goals contained in scenarios. Thus, improving the use of scenarios requires policy-makers to be convinced that long-term goals need to be considered and that scenarios have a potentially vital role to play in long-term policy-making.
- Scenarios are rarely able to identify the real drivers of change. Instead unpredicted or even completely unexpected events are likely to significantly impact the future. Even if wild card options

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are included in the scenario building, they are only a tool to hint at the uncertainty and consequences of unexpected events.

○○ For successful scenario building it is important to have an appropriate institutional framework in which scenario development can be embedded. This may result in 'carry on effects'. If players are inspired by a process they have positively experienced, they may be more enthusiastic about introducing a similar process in their own context. The ÖROK example, which was inspired by ESPON projects and which further inspired some Austrian states, provides a good illustration of this point.

○○ It remains an open question whether the initial task should be to think about the territorial dimension and then about sector policies, or *vice versa*. Depending on the overall objective, the process needed either way may be appropriate. The main question then is how to engage the relevant policy-makers and how, in the final analysis, to produce territorial scenarios.

Overall, scenarios are an important tool. Firstly, they can be communicated to players who may not always welcome the insights provided. The communication of scenario outcomes is important and can promote new insights better than raw statistics, facts and figures on the status quo. Secondly, scenarios provide an important input to the discussion on values and opinions. Different players have different opinions about Europe's future. Scenarios render these differences explicit as they highlight the various perspectives adopted often, for example, by means of visualisations. In this way they can more easily illustrate the territorial dimension of the different futures that need to be discussed. One such example here would be the future of Europe in relation to its eastern neighbourhood.

If territorial perspectives are to play a significant role in the next ESIF programming period, territorial cohesion needs to be promoted now. Scenarios about Europe's territorial future can help to do this.

Key findings on territorial scenarios

➢ Many useful examples of scenarios for the European territory are currently available. The examples are visualised in different ways and often depict quite different indicators, themes and policies while focusing on different levels and territories.

➢ Scenarios are used in different phases of the policy process. Often they provide the starting point for policy development.

➢ Discussing scenarios can be a vehicle for exchanging ideas, possible agreements and changing the mindsets of policy-makers.

➢ Scenarios are based on empirical evidence, quantitative and/or qualitative information. Thus, they can provide a sound basis for developing recommendations or illustrate the likely effects of different policy options.

➢ In order to take all relevant perspectives into account, including processes driven by experts, participatory processes are a key element in the development of scenarios. This process may, in principal, include all levels from the local to the European.

➢ Addressees are decision-makers in the fields of territorial policies and various other relevant sector policies. Moving beyond this group of territorial specialists and 'associates' is however a challenge that requires that sector policies are addressed in appropriate and convincing ways.

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- The development and consequent use of scenarios is often hampered by failures in terms of administrative capacity, a lack of ownership by important stakeholders and/or a failure to promote the long-term engagement of policy-makers whose mindset is usually focused exclusively on the electoral cycle.
- Scenarios are a good means to communicate insights and discuss territorial developments, the impact of territorially relevant policies, and the political choices to be made. Territorial cohesion as a topic is losing momentum and needs to be given a fresh start. In so doing, questions about the Europe we want to build need to be raised.
- If territorial perspectives are to play a significant role in the next EISF programming period, territorial cohesion needs to be promoted now. In this way, territorial scenarios may be able to trigger the necessary discussions for change among a wider circle of decision-makers.
- The aim is to open the minds of policy-makers towards the utility of long-term territorial perspectives. This may be achieved by either first, assessing the impact of sector policies on territorial goals and secondly, reflecting on what needs to be done in sector policies to achieve the territorial objective, or *vice versa*. If focusing on territorial objectives, territorial perspectives ultimately need to form the core of this work.
- Notwithstanding how previous scenarios were constructed, experience gained in the building process provides us with a handy 'rule of thumb' checklist of 'do's and don'ts' although it should not be forgotten that each scenario process is unique and applies its own methods and rules.

Overall it can be concluded that scenarios provide a useful tool in the support of policy-making for example, when assessing alternative policy options within one sector. Furthermore, given that quite detailed or integrated scenarios can be produced they can also be used to 'simulate' different sector policies. By assessing the different combinations and outcomes of several policies simultaneously scenarios have the potential to promote better sector policy coordination. Thus, scenario development can enrich discussion and help to find a sound basis for assessing both the alternative policy options for one field or different combinations of policies for different fields.

While incorporating the advantage of creating ownership in participatory processes and providing decision-makers with a sound basis for their decision-making, there are also disadvantages primarily linked to the complexity of the scenario processes and their outcomes. Qualitative scenarios in particular are often not replicable or can often be difficult for those who are unfamiliar with the scenario building process to understand.

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3   Evidence for European territorial visions

Territorial visions have a different character and aim than scenarios. While both look at potential futures, their methods on how to obtain them and their starting perspectives differ. Whereas scenarios generally begin from the status quo and develop different possible future development paths, visions normally end with one picture of the future. While still being related to empirical evidence, visions typically reflect this evidence in a rather blurred way. The centre of a vision is to depict a desirable future, which may only be achievable in the long-run by following a certain pathway or policy measure. Thus, visions often adopt an even longer-term perspective than scenarios as they are less strongly linked to the present or to current development pathways in the sense of representing the consequence of following a baseline development. A European territorial vision process could, for example, raise and answer questions relating to 'where we want to be' in 2050.

Visions define a desirable picture of the future. This picture is based on a core set of ideas, values and principles. Other terms also used to describe similar long-term pictures of desirable futures are 'perspectives' or 'strategies'. However, perspectives and strategies have a stronger focus on steps towards a desirable future, whereas 'visions' often only describe the picture without much explanation of how to actually achieve it.

Thus, visions are a means to promote debate about long-term future objectives. In general, they formulate and illustrate an ideal situation in respect of the well-being and living conditions of a territory's population.

As with scenario discussions, in the context of European territorial development visions can be used to create awareness about the future potential of and challenges to the European territory, its cities and regions. In contrast to scenarios, debates around visions aim to create a common understanding of what a desirable future may look like. As such, they can help to clarify perceptions about which vision may be more desirable while raising awareness of the need to take decisions in a timely fashion if the idea driving this desirable future is to be turned into a real possibility in the long term.

Examples of territorial visions addressed at the workshop

The vision of the **ESPON project Territorial Scenarios and Visions for Europe** (ET2050) aims to achieve an open and polycentric Europe. Openness is understood as connecting Europe globally and promoting the co-development of neighbourhood regions. This polycentric Europe will utilise regional diversity and endogenous development to reduce regional disparities, support a balanced urban structure and promote sustainable resource management.

The **Long-Term Perspective of the VASAB** conference (Vision And Strategies Around the Baltic Sea) of 2009 is the vision for territorial development in the Baltic Sea Region in 2030. The vision focuses on three themes for which transnational cooperation provides an added value: Urban networks and urban-rural relations; internal and external accessibility; maritime spatial planning and management. The Long-Term Perspective addresses territorial (north-south, east-west, urban-rural) disparities in particular.

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The **European Spatial Development Perspective** was agreed 1999 at the Informal meeting of the Council of Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning. It includes common objectives and concepts for the future development of the territory of the European Union. Aiming at balanced and sustainable development, its three fundamental goals refer to economic and social cohesion, conservation and the management of natural resources and the cultural heritage, and more balanced competitiveness.

"Cities of tomorrow" is a vision, published by the European Commission in 2011, that refers to the integration of all dimensions of sustainable urban development. In this vision, cities become places of advanced social progress, platforms for democracy, culture and diversity, places of regeneration, and places of attraction and engines of economic growth. The urban structure of this vision is based on polycentricity and compact settlement structures with limited urban sprawl.

With regards to the European transport system, the Trans-European Transport Networks (TEN-T) aim to achieve an integrated and resource-efficient multimodal transport system that is coherent across Europe. Focusing on modal integration, interoperability and a coordinated development of infrastructure, the nine **European Core Network Corridors** are an instrument to implement the TEN-T and are expected to contribute to cohesion through improved territorial cooperation. They are envisaged as a means to realise the potential of stakeholders while promoting cooperation between them.

The **Natura 2000 Network** is based on a vision of a coherent European-wide ecological network of nature protection areas, in which priority is given to natural habitats and species of wild *fauna* and *flora* in order to restore or maintain, at favourable conservation status, these habitats and species. Human activities are not prohibited in these areas. The emphasis is rather on future management that is sustainable in ecological and economic terms thus ensuring the long-term survival of Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats.

"Territoires 2040" is a process initiated by the Délégation interministérielle à l'aménagement du territoire et à l'attractivité régionale (DATAR) in order to shed light on the process of the transformation of French territories. It refers to seven different spatial systems for the French territory, ranging from French gateways to low-density areas. After defining the key challenges for the future evolution of each spatial system, the strategic policies and actions are identified that need to be implemented in order to address the key challenges.

3.1 Readiness for preparing territorial visions

Given that the long-term horizon of visions exceeds the short-term electoral orientation of politicians we can assume that readiness among policy-makers to discuss visions is not high. In addition, vision processes are usually time-consuming and may lack sufficient interest and ownership, which creates problems when the people in power change as the result of elections. Ownership is particularly relevant for visions since not only do they provide a basis for decision-making but also imply the need to agree on the envisaged desirable future. Given these limitations it is clear why there can often be a lack of long-term vision and strategic planning. Experience however shows that visions have to be actively supported and used by policymakers.

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In general, visions can provide support for policy development. Visions are often formulated in a 'soft' and rather indicative way as it is easier to find agreement among policy-makers than on descriptions of the future depicted in maps. They can be used to develop shared perspectives among policy-makers. Because they are indicative, visions can also help guide the direction of policy-making as is illustrated in the VASAB example. In fact, this example shows that the visions developed for the Baltic Sea Region are taken into account by the members of VASAB when they develop their own spatial policies or joint strategies such as the macro-regional strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (see figure 5). Given the more general and less technical 'language' of visions, they are generally used for raising awareness beyond the national level and the community of planning specialists.

Figure 5.   Links between the Horizontal Action 'Spatial Planning' and the EUSBSR's Priority Areas and other Horizontal Actions
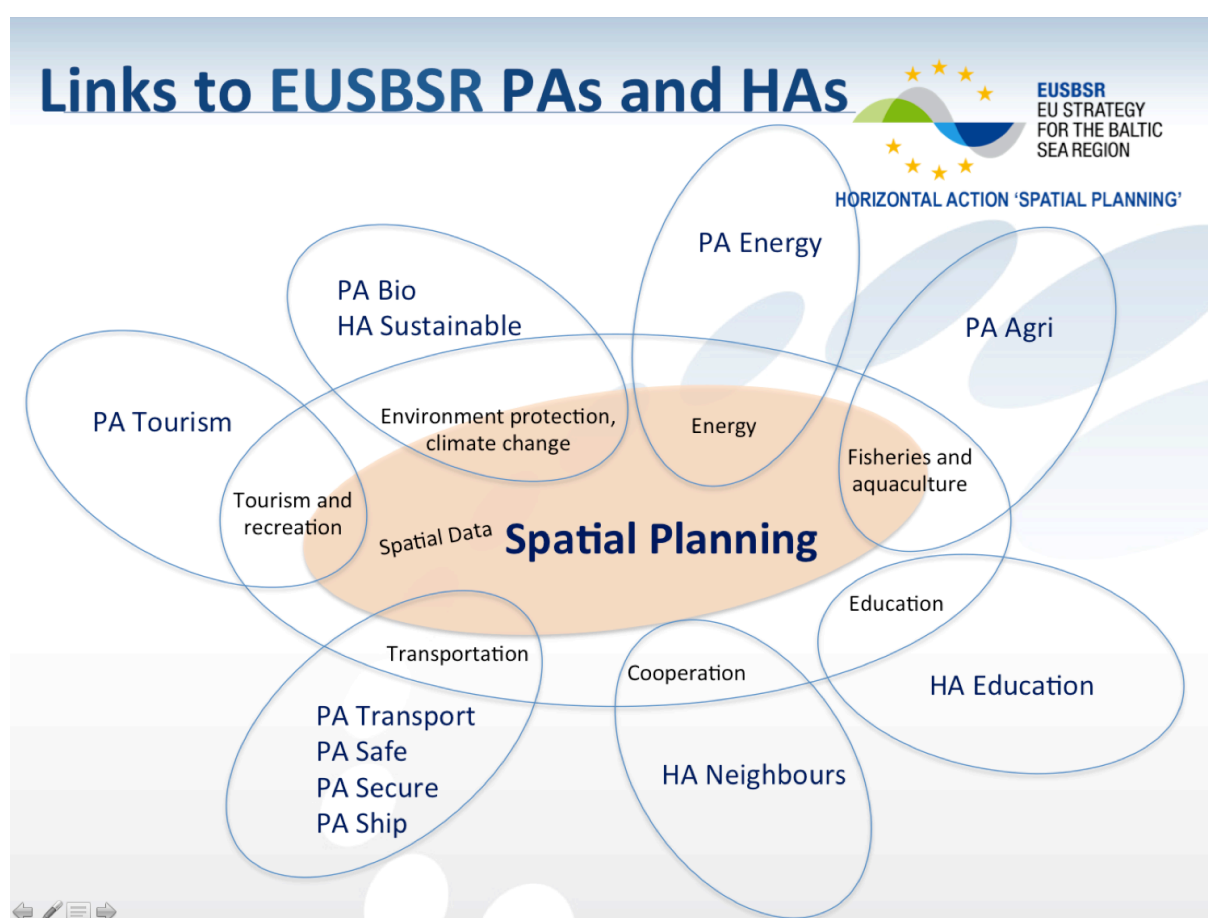
PA – Policy Area; HA – Horizontal Action
Source: Linkaits 2015

For visioning processes to be accepted as useful not do decision-makers have to participate but also they have to be timed in relation to decisive decision-making moments. Timing is therefore crucial. In times of competing political agendas it may be difficult to focus on a vision beneficial for all parts of the territory addressed. If, for instance, regions compete for the location of important transport or other

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infrastructure, their representatives are not likely to cooperate more generally. Once this issue is settled however, the regions can aim towards adopting a common approach and debate how to develop and use the corridor in a way that is best for all affected regions.

Despite their usefulness, visions do have their shortcomings. Although policy-makers are often unfamiliar with how to read maps and often find them interesting but suspicious, as many territorial visions use maps for their visualisation but can depicted their content in a rather vague way. This suggests that there is too strong a focus on geography while other equally important perspectives, such as a macroeconomic balance are neglected. Another shortcoming is linked to the necessary capacity for both developing visions and implementing them. While vision-building processes are complex as such and time-consuming, they will lead to nothing if the necessary level of implementation capacity is lacking once the vision has been established. Thus, a vision process may be more welcome if it envisages a link to implementation from the very beginning, for instance through an action plan.

3.2   Relevant issues and policy fields

Generally speaking, territorial visions focus on **territorial features** such as polycentricity, urban structures or territorial imbalances (see figure 6). The issues and policy fields addressed in European visioning processes concentrate in the main on themes for which transnational cooperation provides a clear added value. These may be new challenges with a global dimension as well as territorial networking and relations between different types of regions, or transnational mobility or planning. Additionally, territorial disparities in levels of socio-economic development may give rise to European territorial visioning.

At the same time, the relevant aim translates rather differently to different territories or types of territories. Thus, it is important to **identify the issues that are common** to all parts of the territory under consideration and address concerns shared by the people for which a vision will be developed. A wide variety of possible access points may exist and may have to be considered simultaneously. These may, for instance, raise questions about how to achieve a better balance between growth and cohesion, how to balance competing political interests, how to achieve macro-economic balance and sustainable growth, how to achieve equity with a high level of employment, or how to balance economic interests with ecological concerns. These approaches to balancing alternate or even opposite objectives are typically considered by cross-thematic visions such as those of the ESPON ET2050 project, the VASAB Long-term Perspective or the European Spatial Development Perspective from 1999.

A number of visions for various themes and sector policies already exist, although they are not always termed visions. Examples here include the visions for an accessible and well-connected Europe, Europe attaining biodiversity, a low-carbon Europe, TEN-T core network (2030) and TEN-T comprehensive network (2050). These visions and their underlying principles may provide the initial ideas and can thus be used as starting points for *territorial* visioning processes.
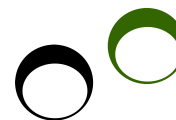
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Figure 6. **Territorial aims for connecting Europe with the world (as one of the 5 dimensions relevant to reach the paramount policy aim of making Europe open and polycentric)**

Source: Mehlbye 2015 (based on ESPON ET2050)

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3.3 Addressees of the visions

The target group for visions is generally the same as that for scenarios. All the above-mentioned addressees are also relevant for visions with a view to creating ownership at all levels of decision-making. To ensure a high level of involvement and ownership, it is necessary to also include the addresses in defining and clarifying long-term policy objectives for the vision. A vision process in comparison to a scenario process is however much more focused on **finding a common understanding among potential players about what should be considered desirable in the future**.

This calls for a **multi-level governance approach** to be adopted for future prospects. While taking into account different responsibility structures across the EU Member States, it is important that the EU level is aware of what is discussed at the national level while, within the Member States, it is important to link national debates with regional and local perspectives and perceptions. Thus, respecting subsidiarity is crucial. There should be a clear division of labour. The EU level can provide inspiration for territorial themes such as corridor development in terms of TEN-T or the 'cities of tomorrow'. The Member States and macro-regional strategies can act as an intermediate level translating European perspectives into the national or macro-regional context. Implementation however takes place at the regional and local levels. Thus, in order to create the necessary ownership it is important to involve these levels because they are not likely to implement something to which they do not feel committed.
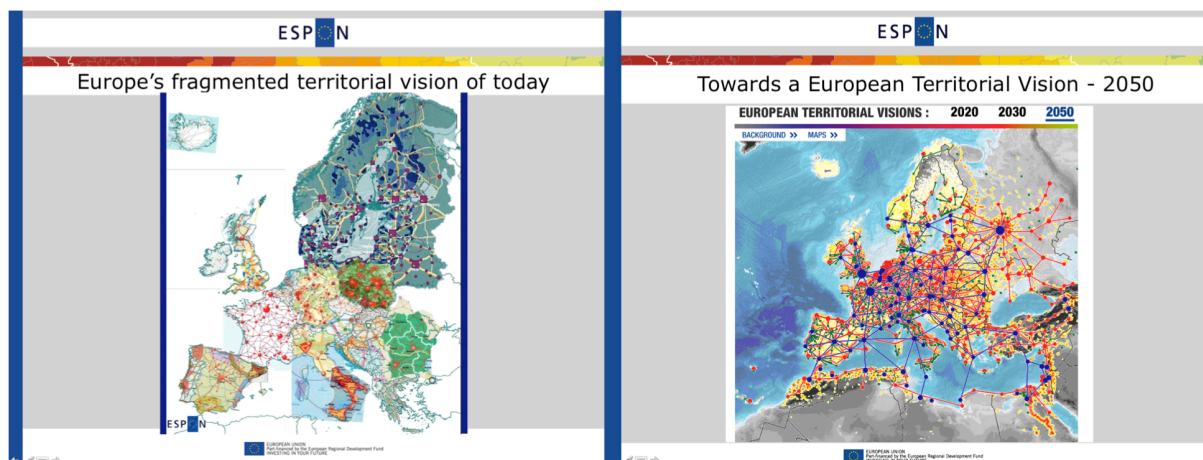
The major challenge then lies in achieving **ownership** throughout the whole visioning process even where politicians leave the political stage while others join the process initiated by their predecessors. Previous visioning processes show that ownership is related to dynamics over time and also to the number of players and sectors involved. Involving a large range of different sectors makes the processes more complex but also increasingly integrated. This may however pose a further challenge to the engendering of a feeling of ownership.

Among the relevant addressees, the European Commission has a very specific interest in having a mandate to further develop a vision for the period after 2020 and to compile local and regional visions to see how they fit together. This could contribute to moving further from a European puzzle of territorial visions to a coherent European vision (see figure 7). In addition, being responsible for the ESIF, the European Commission could promote regional and national visioning processes with respect to possible or desirable results achieved by the ESIF. The starting point for such a process would be the question of what the region or Member State generally wants to achieve with ESI funding. The next step would be to formulate programmes in support of this vision.

In this context visions can provide a coherent, long-term reference framework for policy development highlighting how to move to a vision for the European territory. Policy-makers can then use these pathways and visions in decision-making and to open up preconceived mindsets to what is feasible in the short to medium-term.

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Figure 7.   From fragmented national visions to a European vision

Source: Mehlbye 2015 (based on ESPON ET2050)

3.4 Possible outcomes of visioning processes

Vision processes provide a platform from which to find a **common understanding** on a territory's future. This usually provides new insights on desirable long-term perspectives. Territorial vision processes can also create a better common understanding of the relevant territorial systems that need to be considered, as is illustrated by the French visioning process (see figure 8). This enables policy-makers to produce clear long-term policy objectives across different sectors. Political will supports the development of a clear vision in respect of common values, knowledge and consensus.

For European visions new insights may be gained if common European interests that go beyond national interests can be visualised. These can **raise awareness and ownership** beyond the restricted circle of national decision-makers and territorial planning specialists. In this context visioning processes have two outcomes. On the one hand, the initiation of the process raises awareness as a precondition for vision-making and on the other, the result raises awareness of common challenges, interests and objectives.

For cross-border areas in particular vision building **beyond national interests** is an inherent prerequisite. Since these areas are characterised by administrative as well as economic discontinuities, cooperation that goes beyond national interests and links discontinuous systems can give rise to difficult but in the end fruitful processes that in the long-term will enhance European integration in cross-border areas.

Territorial visions can be used to promote the **territorial dimension in sector policies**. Pilot projects and common actions can therefore be seen as important outputs when attempting to realise the vision.
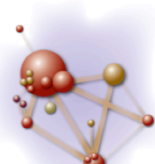
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Figure 8. **Overview of seven spatial systems relevant for the French vision process**

The prospective exercise: «Territoires 2040 »
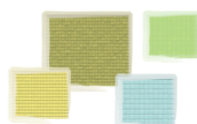
The 7 spatial systems concerned
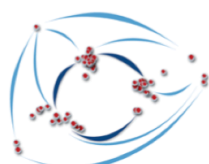
The French urban-metropolised system
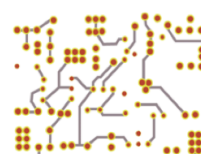
The integrated metropolised systems

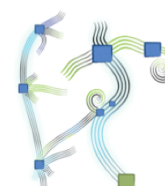The intermediate cities and surrounding areas

The low density areas

The residential and touristic developement areas

The areas of industrial dynamics

The French gateways and the systems of territorial flows

Source: Michal 2015

3.5 What can be learned from past vision experiences?

From past vision experiences some lessons as regards key success factors can be drawn:

- Normally, the vision reflects a common understanding of what the future should look like. The process of how to reach this understanding is a key success factor for a territorial vision. This also means that the purpose and the objectives of the vision are clear to all those involved.

- The political will to engage in a visioning process is a key factor for success. This entails three main requirements: (1) The necessary resources have to be (made) available so that the administrative capacity is sufficient to participate in the process. (2) Throughout the whole process there has to the political will to create ownership among the involved players. (3) Even after the finalisation of the visioning process, the political will has to remain high in order to implement actions and engage political drivers.

- People, informal functions and relations, and networks are all important in successfully addressing a vision and in creating a community among the participants of the process such that they develop common ownership of the vision.

- Timing is important, both with regards to the time needed and to the initiation of the visioning process. The time needed for a visioning process may well exceed the electoral cycle and usually demands a lot of determination from the drivers of the process.

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- Timing is also crucial within policy cycles, since this affects whether a finding may be taken up by members of parliament or committees.
- To ensure long-term ownership and common understanding it may not be sufficient to have a one-time process. As such, updates, further fine-tuning of the vision, or enhancing the actions for implementation are usually necessary.
- A useful vision needs to be well-founded and sufficiently ambitious and coherent. It must be explained in a comprehensive way to different stakeholders and it must show a policy pathway and the availability of tools to realise the vision. For this, evidence-based policy-making and strategic thinking are important.
- Vision-making cannot be detached from other actions. Synergies with other instruments should be actively promoted. Examples in relation to European visioning processes for instance include macro-regional strategies with their horizontal actions that allow for cross-sector and multi-level communication.
- Finally, experience shows that it is often easier to identify common challenges than common interests, although the latter are needed to highlight what to aim for.

Summing up, these lessons can be summarised in five ideas:

- Be patient and wait for the right time.
- Focus on common issues.
- Realise a balanced multi-level governance structure.
- Be open-minded.
- Ensure political support from the beginning.

In addition to these general lessons some further recommendations to help improve the visions are also necessary. These include the need to improve the information base for and the involvement of participants at sub-national levels. While, in terms of the usability of visions, they should be formulated with the needs of policy-makers in mind, which includes a 'translation' for the political level and a clearly defined operationalisation of the actions it has to take. In addition, a number of themes remain under-explored, for instance, sea-based perspectives or the development of European governance structures.

Finally, the above-mentioned difficulties experienced in clearly differentiating between scenarios and visions can be avoided if visions do not start from the territorial perspective. As noted previously, visions should show a desirable situation, for example in relation to peoples' well-being. To translate the overarching vision into a territorial vision would be the second step. If this logic is followed territorial development becomes not an end in itself but rather a means to improve people's living conditions.

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Key findings on territorial visions

➢ The terms 'vision', 'perspective' and 'strategy' are often used as synonyms in discussions about a desirable future.
➢ There is a willingness among policy-makers to work on visions. The rather different time horizons used by vision processes and policy-makers are however difficult to align.
➢ When identifying the relevant themes for visions it is important to search for common interests and objectives and to focus on aspects that need to be tackled (also) beyond national policy-making.
➢ Vision processes can be useful in raising awareness among policy-makers and in work to identify common goals and achieve a common understanding.
➢ Addressees are decision-makers from both the territorial policy community and from various other sector policy areas. The long time spans required for vision processes however undoubtedly hamper the development process and the continuity of ownership among the players involved.
➢ The relation between the territory and visioning process needs to be clarified. A territorial vision is not an end in itself. It should serve larger objectives, such as well-being and/or living conditions. Accordingly, a territorial vision should be understood to represent only the territorial translation of a spatially blind objective or vision.

Summing up, the most important strength of visions is probably the achievement of a common understanding in respect of overall long-term objectives. Having agreed on an overarching desirable future, policy-makers can better assess their policy-decisions against this future rather than against short-term sector objectives that may in the end counteract long-term integrated perspectives. As with scenarios, the disadvantages of visions clearly relate to the complexity of the vision processes as well as to the long-term commitment that may not necessarily be shared by newly elected representatives.

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4 Conclusions

Maps addressing future developments are powerful communication tools. Complementing a large number of existing policy documents, such as the Territorial Agenda 2020 and the Europe 2020 Strategy, territorial outlines of the future – either as scenarios or visions – can enrich policy processes and help them to become more effective and efficient by reflecting the territorial diversity of future developments.

The choice between scenarios and visions depends on the purpose. **Scenarios** are most useful when considering whether policies or specific measures are fit for the future with regard to the territorial diversity of expected developments. **Visions**, on the other hand, are likely to be more useful when discussing whether a policy or specific measure is likely to contribute to developments leading to a desired territorial pattern in Europe. As a reminder, the box below presents the definitions of both terms used in this report. While these definitions provide the bedrock for the report, more work still needs to be done to promote a coherent wording and understanding among the participants involved in the production of European territorial scenarios and visions.

Scenarios are a plausible description of how the future might develop, based on a coherent and internally consistent set of assumptions ('scenario logic') about the key relationships and driving forces.

Visions define a desirable picture of the future. This picture is based on a core set of ideas, values and principles. Other terms also used to describe similar long-term pictures of desirable futures are 'perspectives' or 'strategies'. However, perspectives and strategies have a stronger focus on steps towards a desirable future, whereas 'visions' often only describe the picture without much explanation of how to actually achieve it.

Visions and scenarios have to focus on specific themes. Whether scenario or vision, to become an acknowledged reference point, and viewed as reliable – i.e. methodologically sound and politically accepted – maps can help to address relevant themes. While ESPON among others has already produced a rich seam of work in this regard more needs to be done on a number of specific issues.

Specifically on the **scenarios**, there is a need to support the debate on the territorial dimension of EU Cohesion Policy, e.g. illustrating possible development paths up to 2020 and 2030 for the themes addressed by Cohesion Policy and the development of regional disparities with regard to economic and social cohesion.

When it comes to **visions**, there is a need for a territorial vision of Europe, which could help, for example, guide the revision of the Europe 2020 strategy or support the Juncker Plan by incorporating a territorial dimension.

The table below provides some overview conclusions with regard to territorial scenarios and visions highlighting what to consider when approaching them. Based on this summary of the key points emerging from the previous chapters, suggestions for further work are then further elaborated.

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	Scenarios	Visions
Preparation	• Building largely on expert knowledge but also allow for the involvement of key players • Often alternative scenarios are developed • Can be based on both quantitative and qualitative approaches	• Large participative processes involving players who are supposed to support the vision are needed • Important to ensure sufficient (long-term) commitment of key players • Focus on one commonly agreed vision (often restricted to a specific topic)
Presentation	• Future is uncertain and there are various possible futures to be compared • Maps are good for presentation but can be challenging for policy-makers	• This is 'our' desirable future – ownership necessary • Timing of the final presentation in relation to other decision-making processes is crucial • Maps are good for presentation but can be challenging for policy-makers
Awareness raising	• Good means to communicate insights and discuss territorial developments are necessary • Raises awareness about possible future developments and their territorial dimension	• Raises awareness about shared future visions (and aspects which are not shared) and their territorial dimension • Clarify the role of the territorial dimension within the overall vision
Used for which type of discussion	• Helps relevant players to understand possible future developments and how their decisions / policies relate to these • Can be a vehicle for exchanging ideas, possible agreements and changing the mindset of policy-makers	• Can stimulate a broader debate on a shared vision / common objectives on where 'we' want to go and what the future territory shall look like • Territorial visioning exercises need to serve general / overarching objectives, i.e. they are not an end in themselves
Added value for which type of policies	• Territorial scenarios can bring added value to the dialogue with all of the policies that affect territorial development (at all levels) • Scenarios can bring added value when discussing / assessing the alternative policy options relating to individual sectors	• Territorial visions have a high added value for overarching policies providing the orientation of a common framework for a wide range of other policies or initiatives (e.g. Europe 2020)

Source: own elaboration

Both approaches to future European development need to highlight the overall objective, namely, being able to contribute to the attainment of the overarching European policy and development objectives. Stakeholders need to be involved in the development of scenarios and visions. The role of map use in scenarios and visions seems to be uncontested as a way of raising awareness and intriguing policy-makers: The questions 'how is my region placed and performing' and 'how and why that should be different in the future' remain a good starting point for getting involved and creating ownership. With this understanding in mind, scenarios and visions should be communicated as means rather than an end in itself. In order to do so, different players may play specific roles in bringing forward discussions about scenarios and visions:

➔ **Member States & NTCCP** could provide ESPON with relevant inputs on themes for scenarios, visioning and their mapping which they can use in upcoming national and European policy

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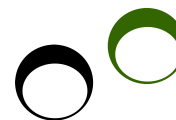27 July, 2015

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developments. This could also include questions on future visions in respect of living conditions in European territories. Furthermore, they could help ESPON to deliver the results with an appropriate effect to key decision-makers.

➔ **DG REGIO & CoR** could provide ESPON with relevant inputs on themes for scenarios, visioning and their mapping which they can use in upcoming European policy developments. Furthermore, they could help ESPON to deliver the results effectively to relevant line DGs.

➔ **ESPON** – if given the mandate by the Member States – could further strengthen its efforts in the field of scenarios and visions, while also testing new forms of mapping and visualisation that allow for more qualitative information and the showing of uncertainties. In various Member States visioning processes are used on a national and regional level. ESPON could compare and analyse the outcomes of these processes as regards typologies, envisaged territorial structures etc., and try to integrate them into a broader European picture. This could be the starting point for a bottom-up European vision process that is in line with the subsidiarity principle.

Preparing for future policy debates. The development of territorial scenarios, visioning and their mapping needs to be accompanied by their active promotion in the relevant policy cycles. To be useful, scenarios and visions need to address the key themes of the main political initiatives in Europe. Furthermore, policy-makers at various governance levels need to encourage the use of such scenarios, visioning and their mapping to discuss the territorial dimension of policy initiatives and foster a better understanding how territorially blind policies can benefit from making the best use of the diversity of territorial development potentials.

If the territorial dimension is to be strengthened in future European policies, the following discussions could be particularly useful:

○○ **European Investment Plan.** The so-called Juncker Plan is not expected to have a strong territorial component. Neither from the perspective of different development stages and paths and decision-making approaches across Europe, nor from the perspective of sector policy integration. Territorial scenarios can serve as useful tools to embed the investments envisaged in that plan in a territorial context to see on which territorial potentials they can draw to achieve the envisaged multiplier effect.

○○ **Europe 2020 Review.** Following the latest information, the review of the Europe 2020 strategy will be launched in late 2015. If Europe 2020 retains its role as an overarching strategy for European policy-making, efforts should be made to strengthen the territorial dimension in this review process. Territorial scenarios could prove to be a powerful tool in this regard.

○○ **Energy Union.** The European Energy Union is an important sector policy with clear territorial implications both as regards the diversity of energy production potentials across Europe and also the territorial patterns of energy consumption. Therefore, reliable future maps addressing the relevant pre-conditions for future territorial patterns of production and consumption factors may prove useful in relation to the effective and efficient implementation of this policy.

○○ **Digital Agenda.** Moving towards a knowledge and digital society on a par with the leading regions in the world, requires considerable investment in knowledge and IT infrastructure as well as in the

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development of future services, innovative business ideas and the education of excellent professionals and skilled citizens. Therefore, a reliable scenario or visioning process mapping the relevant pre-conditions required to promote future territorial patterns in respect of production factors and users could prove useful in guiding the necessary investments.

- ⊙ **Preparing for ESIF 2020+.** Discussion on the European Structural and Investment Funds post 2020 will begin shortly. If the ESI Funds and in particular also Interreg are supposed to receive a stronger territorial dimension, effort is required to continuously advocate the use of territorial future maps in the relevant European and national *fora*.

➔ **NTCCP** could now start to prepare short and focussed discussion papers concerning the European Investment Plan, Energy Union, Digital Agenda, review of Europe 2020 and ESIF 2020+. These can be based on existing territorial scenarios and help to deliver a target input at the right moment.

➔ **DG REGIO** could assist the NTCCP in these efforts.

➔ **CoR** could further strengthen its efforts and communication strategy concerning the territorial dimension of the European Investment Plan, Energy Union, Digital Agenda, review of Europe 2020 and ESIF 2020+.

TIA and scenarios as eye openers or invitations for dialogue. To render policies fit for the future in terms of the territorial dimension and expected territorial developments focus should not be restricted to the large European political initiatives. Other policy developments can also benefit from a better understanding of how they link into expected and/or desirable territorial developments in Europe. This may facilitate effective and efficient policy development while making the best use of Europe's territorial diversity.

In this respect territorial impact assessments can play an important role. Reliable information on expected territorial developments can serve as an eye opener and also be useful in various impact assessments of a policy initiative – both at the EU and the national level.

At the EU level the territorial dimension has recently been integrated into the official Commission Impact Assessment process. To be successful however this requires appropriate and easy-to-use tools for experts to use in the conduct of their impact assessments. This concerns not only the tool of impact assessment but also efforts to integrate information on expected future developments (scenarios) in the tools.

Furthermore, the results need also to be delivered directly to the relevant decision-makers (preferably at the political level) in order to attract attention rather than be posted 'to whom it may concern'. To achieve this, further effort is required to provide just-in-time and tailor-made evidence, and at the same time also increase its insights about the specific rationales of various sector policies and their territorial dimension.

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➔ **ESPON** could further strengthen its efforts in the field of territorial impact assessments and make an effort to integrate information on scenarios in the impact assessment tools to strengthen the future dimension. At the same time, the tools need also to become more user friendly to serve as eye openers.

➔ **NTCCP** could help ESPON to deliver the results to the relevant national decision-makers. To begin with, perhaps even more content discussions at the Director General Meetings could help in this regard.

➔ **DG REGIO** could help ESPON to deliver the results to the relevant line DGs and experts conducting the relevant Commission Impact Assessments. In cooperation with ESPON it might even be possible to develop a specific tool or guideline for future-oriented territorial impact assessments.

➔ **CoR** could help ESPON to deliver the results to the relevant decision-makers, especially at the regional and local level. This includes the communication and content-related 'translation' of European discussions and processes to the local and regional level.

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