

Integrated Multi-level Analysis of the
Governance of European Space (IMAGES)

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Preface

In recent years the debate on European influences on different policy sectors has gained momentum across Europe and conceptual, theoretical and empirical debates over what may be labeled Europeanisation, internationalization, globalization or regionalization have been lively amongst and across disciplinary and sectoral spheres. This report seeks to contribute to this debate by offering some analytical perspectives and operational instruments into the debate on spatial policy (/policies) *in* Europe, as well as *for* Europe. It was felt by the team of researchers involved in this project that the current research on EU spatial issues remains largely descriptive in its analysis of European policy-making, or focuses on spatial development trends. For example, the European Spatial Planning Observation Network (ESPON) analyses spatial development rather than spatial policy-making itself. Other research again tends to focus on the impacts of existing EU policies on spatial development, and explore how new institutional arrangements and governance models can help in the operationalisation of this relatively new policy field. Only by bringing these two approaches together can we learn from governance practices in the relevant fields, as well as make educated policy recommendations for spatial policy, as the institution publishing this report for instance is expected to do. Before we can do this however we need to have a clear grasp on the different issues involved and the epistemological, value-based and normative understandings involved.

This working paper arose from an ongoing conversation that has moved across territorial and disciplinary borders. The paper is based on an initial collaboration between Kai Böhme (Nordregio), Tim Richardson (University of Sheffield) and Ole B. Jensen (University of Aalborg). Subsequent discussions were developed with a broader circle of researchers including Stephen Connelly and Gordon Dabinett (Sheffield), Kaisa Lähteenmäki-Smith, Karin Bradley, Holmfridur Bjarnadóttir and Sigríð Hedin (Nordregio), Richard Ek (University of Lund) and Kristina Nilsson (Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences). Initial editing of the report was done by Sara Fuller (University of Sheffield), final editing by Kaisa Lähteenmäki-Smith and Kai Böhme. Liselott Happ-Tillberg was responsible for the technical editing and and Chris Smith for the final language editing. The various contributions made by these individuals and their organisations are greatly appreciated.

The multitude of disciplinary, theoretical and methodological positions that those involved in this project represent has implications on the result of this project and the richness of the approaches necessarily implies a versatile interpretative framework, rather than a single approach. We hope that the report will act as a useful invitation for further discussion.

Stockholm, October 2005

Executive Summary

This working paper forms part of an ongoing dialogue between academics and policy researchers on the implications of the emergence of a new European spatial policy field, as well as the spatial implications of other longer standing policy sectors within the European governance structure. The initial notion that the European project has spatial dimensions leads to more complex questions about the whole nature of integration, creating challenges for people, communities, environments and places.

This discussion resulted in a proposal for an analytical approach termed IMAGES- Integrated Multi-Level Analysis of the Governance of European Space. The framework has been developed to address the core question: how does the emergence of a new European spatial policy field condition policymaking and implementation across Europe, as its core values and ideas are contested across different scales, sectors and territories of governance?

This approach sets out to examine what questions could be asked, what values could be deployed, what theoretical perspectives might be brought to bear, and how arguments could be built, to support a critical engagement with the field of European spatial policy.

This engagement is underpinned by the idea of spatial justice, with a core recognition that there are important questions to be asked about who wins and loses from spatial policies and decisions made within the European polity. It seeks to understand the extent to which the conditions that cause inequality are revealed or hidden, and reproduced or challenged by these policy processes, while also exploring the normative spatial issues and the values that underpin them.

Methodologically, the approach makes use of policy-making narratives. These are constructed of either a single EU policy instrument or an exploration of spatial strategy making in different territories. Together these cases provide complementary insights into the Europeanisation of spatial policy making across a multilevel field. Conducting both types of cases allows a rich picture to be built up across sectors, scales, and territories, of how spatial policy ideas are being constructed and contested across the emerging policy field.

The narratives each follow a common structure defined as ‘cutting edges’. These cutting edges are theoretically informed and focus attention on the core spatial ideas themselves: the construction of new forms of policy knowledge giving legitimacy to these new ideas; agenda-setting across multi-level arenas; relations between scales and sectors of governance; the democratic and consensual nature of policy making; and the effects of Europeanisation on policy diversity and homogeneity across territories.

Therefore, by applying the IMAGES framework to spatial policy research, we hope to provide useful insights into policies with a spatial impact, as well as on the nature of policy making and its impact on spatial justice.

Glossary

CSD: Committee on Spatial Development

ESDP: European Spatial Development Perspective

ESPON: European Spatial Planning Observation Network

EU: European Union

IMAGES: Integrated Multi-Level Analysis of the Governance of European Space

RIS: Regional Innovation Strategies

SEA: Strategic Environmental Assessment

TENs: Trans-European Networks

WFD: Water Framework Directive

I. Introduction

This work represents the output of a dialogue between academics and policy researchers about how critical research can play a part in understanding the implications of the emergence of a new European spatial policy field. It addresses the issue of which questions should be asked, what values could be deployed, what theoretical perspectives might be brought to bear, and how arguments could be built, to support a critical engagement with this field. The paper is thus to be seen as a discussion paper, inviting other researchers in this field to engage in the further exploration of these issues, through their own research into the tentative research ideas and questions it poses.

These are complex questions within a nascent, rapidly shifting field, which is difficult to articulate as an entity. Yet it seems an essential task, since the simple initial idea that the European project could have spatial dimensions leads to more complex questions, concerning how ideas about European space could create particular and far reaching challenges for people, environments and places. As new forms of governance break out across Europe we need to ask how spatial ideas are becoming the source of new struggles at different spatial scales. What values are at stake here, and what normative choices does our approach entail?

The paper is based on the belief that the formation of this new policy field demands critical attention by researchers. The emerging field of European spatial policy, taking shape across many sectors of policy making, and across all levels of governance from the EU institutions to local authorities and municipalities, raises many issues for research (Faludi and Waterhout, 2002). In addition to having an impact on the citizens' lives in their immediate local and regional living environments where policies with increasingly European 'roots' are implemented, the Europeanisation of spatial policy also has a conceptual, semantic and discursive dimension (Böhme, 2002). Simply put, it involves the creation of a set of concepts, language and images: a new rationality for organising European space (Jensen and Richardson, 2004). The reproduction of this new rationality of space, involving the definition, interpretation, contestation and redefinition of these new concepts, is taking place across a complex multi-level, multi-sectoral governance environment. To date, analysis has rarely engaged with this new policy field in an integrated or critically engaged way. This is not to claim, however, that EU policy or spatial development is under-researched areas. Past research and contributions have been largely policy specific and client driven (such as evaluations) or based on more narrow academic disciplines, driven by specific contributions to knowledge (such as economic studies of convergence). A shared and reflexive goal of the authors is to develop an approach to researching EU spatial policy that is fundamentally collaborative, interdisciplinary and driven by a shared critical perspective.

The new analytical framework proposed here is termed IMAGES (Integrated Multi-level Analysis of the Governance of European Space). The framework has been developed to address the core question: how does the emergence of a new European spatial policy field condition policymaking and implementation across Europe, as its core values and ideas are contested across different scales, sectors and territories of governance? The emergence of European spatial policy itself is seen as a multi-level and diverse process, influenced by various actors.

This question demands a value-driven response, informed by research reaching across many dimensions of governance and policy making. For the normative basis of this research we see an inter-disciplinary approach as a value in its own right. The point of developing the new approach is to explore how to generate such synthetic insights from different disciplinary and conceptual approaches within an integrated analytical framework. It searches for ways to draw together analysis taking place across different policy fields and disciplines, an important task if the formation of the new policy field is to be properly understood.

Our belief is that IMAGES can assist policy makers and academics to understand more fully the nature of spatial policy making in Europe. The complex research programme we call

for here is needed to break free of the limitations of empirical analysis contained within particular sectors, or working at selected levels of governance. Researching across these boundaries is required to understand the subtle dynamics and relations between activities in different sectors and scales (Brenner, 1998). It is the meeting points or border crossings that are particularly interesting for analysis, for example where one policy sector interacts with another, or different scales of governance converge. It is here, at these border crossings, where specific sectoral or scalar dimensions are interpreted and redefined to fit particular contexts, that generalised into a European spatial policy discourse.

The paper is structured in five chapters. It begins with an introduction to the emerging European spatial policy field, which leads into an identification of the core challenges for further research. This raises the particular conceptual and methodological problems that this paper seeks to explore. The second section develops the IMAGES conceptual approach, which could be used to investigate key issues in the emergence of a new transnational spatial policy field across multi-levels and sectors of governance. In the third section, the key critical elements of IMAGES, the 'cutting edges' are expanded in more detail. In the fourth section, the possible operationalisation of the IMAGES approach is highlighted. The paper ends with some conclusions about spatial justice and the IMAGES framework.

2. Background and context: European Spatial Policy

Spatial policy-making in the EU can be seen as a field of activity operating across a multitude of sectors, territorial scales and administrative tiers. In line with Williams (1996), spatial policy is defined here as ‘any EU policy which is spatially specific or is in effect spatial in practice’ and includes any policy which seeks to influence land use planning, spatial strategy making, as well as territorial policy within member states (Williams, 1996: 7).

This clearly entails that a wide range of policy sectors are involved. Of particular importance are those that manifestly seek to influence changes in regional development, transportation, the environment and land-use. For example, the programme for a trans-European transport network represents a clear strategy for the restructuring of European space, where a patchwork of national networks is transformed into a pan-European system, which identifies links, nodes and corridors of European significance (Richardson 1997, 2000). Other less obvious sectors may potentially affect spatial development even more profoundly. For example, sectors such as competitiveness, innovation and research may give little attention to a spatial perspective, but could influence and shape the possibilities for spatial development in particular places.

In addition to this broad horizontal dimension of spatial policy, there is an extensive vertical dimension created by policy making at all territorial scales from the local to the European. The European spatial policy field is also capable of supporting new arenas in between the existing political and administrative tiers, such as cross-border or transnational regions. These wide-ranging vertical and horizontal dimensions mean that spatial policy is developed and implemented across a complex governance landscape.

2.1 A common approach to EU spatial policy? Developing the ESDP

The implementation and evaluation of the spatial impacts of many of the policies and programmes of the EU have often been ignored (Davies, 1994). Within this context, the emergence of a common EU approach to spatial policy, most recently seen in the publication of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) in 1999 (CEC, 1999) can be regarded as part of a concerted attempt to establish a sense of vision and co-ordination across the wide range of policies, regulations and other instruments which seek to implement EU political, economic and social objectives (Richardson and Jensen, 2000).

The ESDP is now in its ‘application’ phase, though work on spatial co-operation has been in progress for several years. Initiatives in the 1990’s by DG Regio and the work of the infra-national (Weiler, Haltern *et al*, 1995) Committee of Spatial Development (CSD) led to the publication of several key reports, particularly ‘Europe 2000’ (CEC, 1991), ‘Europe 2000+’ (CEC, 1994) and the Compendium of spatial planning systems and policies in the member states (CEC, 1997). These documents provide explicit evidence of an inter-textual connection of plans and visions for the EU, which are all part of the discursive construction of a new spatial policy and planning field.

2.2 Delivering the ESDP

The application of the ESDP concentrates on three key areas: the influence over planning activities within member states, the promotion of new forms of transnational and cross-border planning through new institutional frameworks, and the specific influence on EU policies. These will be discussed briefly in turn.

The interaction between the ESDP and spatial policy within the Member States is complex, though the ESDP clearly aims to 'Europeanise' spatial policy and planning at all levels. The ESDP proposes that Member States now take into account its policy aims and options in their respective national spatial planning systems (CEC, 1999: 45). To a certain extent this can be considered to have been successful. Frequent references to the European dimension underline claims for funding and financial support, and a range of policy-lobbying organisations at various levels use the ESDP terminology as a point of reference to support their interests.

Transnational actions by the Member States are becoming increasingly significant, such as for example, co-operation over international infrastructure links, and increasing political support for transnational planning in the EU institutions, particularly the Committee of the Regions (Williams, 1996). Furthermore, the influence of transnational programmes such as INTERREG cannot be underestimated, as since 1996, INTERREG has basically become a *de facto* field of implementation for the ESDP rationale and policy (CSD, 1999: 39). With regard to the funding made available for these programmes, it can be argued moreover that the transnational co-operation approach is becoming increasingly important. Indeed, there are indications that under the next Structural Funds period from 2006 onwards, transnational co-operation will come to play an ever more important role.

Although the ESDP recognises the need to integrate key policy sectors however, (including transport, agriculture and environmental policy) it is clear that activity in these sectors has yet to be brought under a common spatial framework. The creation of a unified policy field is thus still a long way off, even if it is achievable, with integration here being a critical challenge. Therefore, the field of action of European spatial policy must be conceptualised and investigated as a multi-sectoral field, rather than merely as a question of the implementation of a single core policy document (the ESDP).

This introductory chapter has provided an overview of the nature of European spatial planning, and provided some contextual information for the IMAGES approach. The following chapters will build on this in order to explain the IMAGES framework, exploring how it can be more fully operationalised. The next chapter will introduce the conceptual underpinnings of the IMAGES framework.

3. The IMAGES conceptual framework

Research into European spatial policy is a field that has gradually taken shape over the last decade (e.g. Williams, 1996; Faludi, 2002; Faludi and Waterhout, 2002). It is characterised by different approaches and is, with some exceptions (e.g. Böhme, 2002), less occupied with understanding the ‘big picture’ of the spatialisation of the European project, and more with the *a*-theoretical analysis of the European dimension of national state and local planning (e.g. Tewdwr-Jones and Williams, 2001).

Current research on EU spatial issues is also relatively descriptive in its analysis of European policy-making, focussing predominantly on spatial development trends. For example, the European Spatial Planning Observation Network (ESPON) mainly analyses spatial development trends. Other research has focused on the impacts of existing EU policies on spatial development, and explored how new institutional arrangements could help in the operationalisation of spatial policies. Within the field of regional policy for instance, recent research has examined issues of economic competitiveness and convergence (Armstrong, 1995; Dunford and Smith, 2000; Tumpel-Gugerell and Mooslechner, 2003). Others seek to explain the impacts and behaviour associated with specific regional development programmes through perspectives on governance such as regional innovation systems (Morgan and Nauwelaers, 1999; Heraud, 2003) and the integration with local and state measures (Bachtler and Turok, 1997; Borrás, 1998; Balchin, Sykora et al., 1999).

3.1 IMAGES and spatial justice: a new approach to researching spatial policy

As a result of the fragmented research field, the understanding of the many ways in which a new spatial focus is emerging across EU policy sectors remains limited and there is a need for a more comprehensive analysis of EU spatial policy making. This is necessitated by questions over who the winners and the losers of the spatial policies and decisions made within the European polity.

In response to this, IMAGES seeks to build an analytical framework to examine how the construction of this new spatial agenda is taking place, through the deployment of policies and programmes across EU space, and their playing out across multiple scales and sectors. This therefore focuses on how key concepts are constructed, contested, reproduced and institutionalised across multi-levels of governance. It is moreover supported by conceptual and methodological insights from the broader field of European integration studies, in particular from the diverse literature generated from within different disciplinary perspectives on multi-level governance (Marks, Hooghe *et al.*, 1996; Bache, 1998); transnational policy networks (Richardson, 1996; Kickert, Klijn *et al.*, 1997; Kohler-Koch, 1999), anthropology (Shore, 2000), and political sociology (Rumford, 2002).

This framework is fundamentally underpinned by a value driven perspective of *spatial justice*. We adopt spatial justice as a guiding principle in order to make explicit a sharper critical edge in our analysis.

Within this context two closely linked issues will be addressed:

- The spatial distribution of 'justice', both outcomes and process i.e. the '*spatiality of (in)justice*.'
- The extent to which elements of (in)justice are inherent in the spatial ideas being promoted, recognising the impact that space as a social product can have on social/economic/political processes i.e. the '*(in)justice of spatiality*' (Dikec, 2001: see below for a further elaboration of this idea).

Changes in temporal and spatial relations entail social, cultural, and economic changes. These may be positive and constructive or negative, causing 'not only the destruction of ways of life and social practices built around preceding time-space systems, but the 'creative destruction' of a wide range of physical assets embedded in the landscape' (Harvey, 1996: 241). Whichever is the case, there are clearly issues of justice implicit in such changes, both within the boundaries of the Union itself, and also beyond its boundaries; we cannot remain oblivious to the possibility that policies which ostensibly and perhaps in fact have good (just) outcomes for European citizens do so at the cost of others, distant and unseen (see Harvey, 1996: 233). Therefore, using the IMAGES framework, it should become possible to reach a critical view on spatial policy making in Europe that takes into account the complex relations between values and diversity.

3.2 Meanings of and conceptual problems for 'justice'

In order to establish spatial justice as a workable analytical principle, two issues have to be addressed. Firstly, for all its intuitive attractiveness, social justice is far from a singular concept with a settled meaning, not only ambiguous and contested, but 'essentially contested' in the sense that competing interpretations are incompatible and claimed by their proponents as *the* correct interpretation (Gallie, 1955). Justice can be defined on criteria drawing from libertarian, utilitarian, contractarian, egalitarian and other philosophies (Harvey, 1996: 398), and conceptions may be promoted and defended from differing political standpoints. For example, a thorough-going neo-liberal would defend the outcomes of market transactions as fair, and deride as unjust any state intervention to support those who were structurally disadvantaged in the open market – see, for example, Hayek (1976). We are thus apparently in a situation where, before we can go any further, it is necessary to determine 'which theory of social justice is most socially just' (Harvey, 1996: 342), or at least to establish grounds for selecting one theory over another, with the alternative being to recognise that in any given situation, different justice claims or analyses can be made, with no rational way of adjudicating between them.

Further, even within a single conception, operationalising it in any real, and particularly spatial, context is fraught with difficulty. If, say, we were interested in the equitable distribution of environmental quality as our a criterion of justice, how could we assess this? Which environmental qualities? Equitable distribution amongst whom? How much is equitable – enough for basic needs? Or a literally equal distribution? (See Lafferty and Langhelle (1999) and Langhelle (2000) for a discussion of this in the context of the social justice aspects of sustainable development). These complexities potentially have the same disabling result as the second problem, the postmodern critique of any universal principles. Thus Harvey writes:

'The effect of the postmodern critique of universalism has been to render any application of the concept of social justice problematic' (1996: 342)

'Is it possible ever to talk about justice as anything other than a contested effect of power within a particular place at a given time?' (1996: 329)

Taking into consideration the different theoretical understandings and standpoints, any judgement about justice is therefore suspect: not only do we have no unequivocal grounds for selecting between different approaches to justice, but whichever we do select is simply part of a potentially oppressive discourse, and certainly cannot be elevated into a universal standard of justice *without* being oppressive. This is problematic because we *do* want to make such judgements about the justice of policies and not to be backed into the situation where 'postmodern reflection... seems to deny itself just the sort of normative argument capable of conducting a successful fight' (White, 1991: 116; quoted in Harvey, 1996: 343).

In conceptualising spatial justice within the Images framework, the problems referred to above need to be addressed. Scholars such as Young (1990) or Sandercock (1998) have attempted to resolve these by attempting to build a general theory with a respect for difference at its heart. Recognising the problems inherent in this, Dikec offers a further development, embracing the principle of the right to difference, and giving it the necessary normative direction by further adopting a principle ('*égalité*') that justice must embody a striving for freedom and equality, intrinsically imbued with the notion that this is for all, not for a particular group that might invoke arguments about justice in support of its own, narrow, freedom at a price for others (Dikec, 2001).

It would however seem that the principal problem remains: how can we justify the selection of this particular normative principle, however attractive it might be? These debates are not going to be solved here, and may indeed not even be soluble. Harvey suggests that Marx was right: that *between equal rights, force decides*, and that 'class [and by extension, other] struggle is then over exactly which principles of justice shall prevail' (Harvey, 1996: 399). In this situation philosophers cannot do more than 'clear the underbrush' – the debate has to be one of politics and struggle rather than rational academic discourse. This is not, however, an impasse. On the one hand despite the inability of philosophers to pin down a 'correct' and 'universal' concept of justice, there is a family of concepts in a Wittgensteinian sense, which share some common meaning and get used in the same way to perform the same kinds of claims (Wittgenstein, 1968; Harvey, 1996: 330). In any given case different conceptions of justice can be drawn upon by different groups to advance the same kinds of claims, and we can recognise a justice claim as such, even if we disagree with the criteria of justice that are being called upon.

On the other hand such uncertainty is not necessarily disabling, though it may be unsettling from a traditional analytical point of view. As Flyvbjerg (1998; 2001) argues, we have to situate ourselves, such that, as researchers we have to take up a position, as we simply cannot sit outside the processes we study and appeal to some universal standard to judge them. Rather, in analysing and evaluating we will have to 'take sides'. However, at the present stage of the project we cannot be explicit about how this will be done, nor do we have to be. The choice will have to be made in each setting that IMAGES investigates, and each analyst will need to establish for their part of the investigation which aspects of justice and which social groups are salient. It will however be possible to establish a broad range of criteria, and a likely range of groups, which constitute a set of dimensions of justice with which we might want to be concerned in any given situation.

Spatial injustice and the injustice of space

Pirie first raised the question whether spatial injustice can be equated with the spatial distribution of social justice (Pirie, 1983), and concluded that, given a conception of space as absolute, as a container in which things happen, 'spatial justice' is simply a 'shorthand' for 'social justice in space' (471). Such a conception would point us towards simply looking at the distributional aspects of justice, thus encountering Young's (1990) critique that such a focus may miss the broader picture. Widening the debate would allow the question of whether certain aspects of such space are, in themselves, (un)just. Dikec emphasises the dialectical relationship that such an approach suggests, developing a focus on both:

‘The spatiality of injustice – from physical or locational aspects to more abstract spaces of social and economic relationships that sustain the production of injustice – and the injustice of spatiality – the elimination of the possibilities for the formation of political responses’ (Dikec, 2001: 1792).

‘This is to reconcile the tension between overvalorizing and overlooking distributional issues. The focus, therefore, is not merely on how spatialisation affects distribution, but also on how it stabilizes distributional patterns’ (Dikec, 2001: 1799).

This is useful, but overemphasises the stabilising, ‘conservative’, influence of space, in contrast to Harvey’s recognition of the potentially revolutionary nature of changes in spatial practices. For our purposes it is important to recognise that socially constructed space has both characteristics – that changes in the way that space is constructed has implications, just and unjust, through disrupting and shifting existing relations, and can also tend to stabilise patterns once they are in place. The general point stands. In Dikec’s words:

‘If the problems of inequality, exclusion, segregation and social devalorization enter the socio-political agenda as concerns of justice, it is important to consider the ways in which: first, such problems are manifested spatially; and second...such problems are produced and reproduced spatially, through the very production of space. Injustice and its persistence, in this sense, is the product of spatial dynamics.’ (Dikec, 2001: 1798)

We are thus drawn to examine spatially mediated processes, as well as outcomes. This approach is compatible with Young’s insistence that ‘instead of focusing on distribution, a concept of justice should begin with the concepts of domination and oppression’ (Young, 1990: 3). For her, domination arises from ‘structural or systematic phenomena which exclude people from participating in determining their actions or the conditions of their actions’ (ibid.: 31), whereas oppression is a ‘structural phenomena that immobilizes or diminishes a group’ (ibid.: 42). As Smith puts it, ‘oppression constrains self-development; domination constrains self-determination’ (Smith, 1994: 104). Each of these involves elements relating to both outcomes and processes, which are intimately, dialectically linked: outcomes are both the result of processes and constitute the structures through which the processes operate.

Dimensions of Justice

In order to make these rather abstract issues around space and justice sufficiently concrete to act as criteria through which policy developments can be interrogated, we link Young’s conception of justice with the idea of the uneven spatial distribution of access and opportunities in a very broad sense, and so to the idea of social exclusion. We focus on exclusion as resulting from structures and processes, rather than being primarily a characteristic of excluded groups, specifically ‘the processes and actions of agencies and institutions which have the effect of excluding individuals, or groups, or communities from many of the benefits of society that are expected’ (Murray, 1998). Exclusion is thus seen as one possible impact of the spatialisation, or particular spatialisations, of European policy.

Following Murray, who defines exclusion in terms of access to four different aspects or ‘systems’ in society, our criteria for evaluation include the spatial unevenness of access to the democratic/legal, labour market, welfare state, and family/community systems. Further, we can add to this exclusion from other ‘systems’ which are fundamental to ‘quality of life’ – notably transportation and housing – and differential access to a range environmental goods and exposure to environmental ‘bads’. Which are of importance is situation dependent, but we can envisage these encompassing environmental quality in terms of its cultural meaning, effects on health, beauty, and perhaps more.

Such exclusion may be physical, for example where policies result in physically distancing individuals or communities from employment opportunities or health services, but can also be economic, social and/or psychological. This understanding thus overlaps with Young’s concerns, but adds further criteria, insofar as they are not incorporated within the notion of exclusion, policies and processes can also be judged against the impacts on oppression and domina-

tion of affected groups. Who the significant groups are would also be situation dependent. Typically an analysis would involve considerations of gender, class and ethnicity (Molina, 2000), but in particular cases would also extend to encompass spatially defined communities as well. Given the dialectical conception of the relationship between space and justice, the analysis will focus on both the spatial distribution of these elements of social justice and the way the construction of space stabilises or alters these patterns, both politically/socially and physically.

Spatial justice or injustice can also be observed at different geographical *scales*. Thus, for example, dependency theorists like Samir Amin (1976; 1977) and Immanuel Wallerstein (1979) have analysed power relations and issues of justice amongst different regions, countries or continents. They are primarily concerned with the patterns of dependency, domination and oppression between regions of different economic or cultural strengths, most clearly manifested between 'first world regions' on the one hand and 'third world regions' on the other. Considering the relative strengths and development trajectories of regions is also at the core of EU regional policy and Structural Funds. Operating at the continental scale however often means that one is dealing with entities such as regions expressed in maps, figures and statistics and thus that one is often discussing what the policies and development would mean for these different territories rather than discussing their implications on the everyday life of the people 'on the ground'. Zooming into the territories and beyond what can be captured in statistics, it is clear that the territories are not of course homogenous entities. They are populated with people living very different lives and having very different ideas of what development is and what constitutes good and bad environments. It is at this scale that the justice aspects with regard to different social groups becomes evident. While this has been the scale at which the concept of 'spatial justice' has principally been developed (Soja, DiKec and Sandercock) it is clearly applicable at other scales and, crucially, between scales, where apparently 'just' situations at one scale may be 'unjust' at others.

IMAGES suggests therefore the need to analyse international, inter-regional and intra-regional justice relations simultaneously.

It is important to recognise that alternative, potentially rival and conflicting, conceptions of a space are always possible. Indeed, this is inherent in the idea that a new conception of European space is being promoted at the European level, and in the project's fundamental premise that spatial ideas are (re)constructed and contested at different levels of governance. We are therefore concerned with the ideas promoted by the EU, with alternative conceptions, and with the relationships between them, i.e. whether they coexist or conflict, whether they have an independent, positive aspect or are simply reactive.

In this sense the issue of spatial justice will concern the 'battle for Europe' in terms of its contested spatial practices and symbols. This is partly an issue of how actors at different levels of governance construct, or attempt to construct, their local or the wider European space, and whether they do this through attempting to subvert or resist dominant policies that are perceived as being economically disadvantaging, or through supporting initiatives such as Slow Cities, based on a different tradition of civic values. This is clearly linked to the issue of how civil society organises and how it engages in dialogues and 'counter visions' within the public sphere across Europe- the nature of its institutionalisation and its engagement with governance processes. Thus NGOs and local government come together in some areas to promote local economies, while elsewhere, citizen groups mobilise in resistance to the European spatial project. The latter is implicit throughout the preceding discussion – any consideration of the procedural elements of spatial justice will inevitably raise questions for, and go hand-in-hand with, an analysis of democratic process.

As a final dimension to the issue of spatial justice the question of identity arises. The task here is to uncover and explore the underlying rationale and powers at play in order to understand who gains and who loses. Issues of spatial justice thus connect with the potential, imaginary and realized notions of territorial belonging and identification.

Summing up on the dimensions of spatial justice, we would argue that the analysis of spatial justice in IMAGES can be conducted through addressing the following questions, for any given spatial policy or spatialisation of a policy idea:

- How does this affect patterns of exclusion in terms of democratic/legal, labour market, welfare states, family/community systems, access to housing and transport?
- How does this affect the changing distribution of environmental goods and 'bads'?
- How does the changing construction of space stabilise or alter such patterns? Does the reshaping of space increase the (in)justice of spatiality?
- How are the dominant conceptions of space opposed? And how do alternative notions, ideas and counter rationales arise and become articulated, and in which settings?

As we consider spatial justice as an underlying value base, and as Flyvbjerg noted, researchers have to take a position and thus we consider spatial justice as a position for IMAGES. This notion will therefore run as a thread through the various elements of this paper, and form both a 'value base' for those elements while also providing the link between them.

4. IMAGES Methodology: 'Narratives' and 'Cutting Edges'

In the previous discussion, we argued that there is a need to focus on the spatial ideas that have become dominant in European spatial policy, and on how these ideas are institutionalised in multi-level policy-making systems as this is the key to understanding how the emerging spatial policy field influences the way that policy is developed and implemented across Europe. The core values underlying the new spatial ideas, and the ideas themselves, become sites of struggle across different scales, sectors and territories of governance and this is what we see as the contested governance of European space.

In an attempt to operationalise an integrated, multi-level analysis of these processes, the IMAGES framework hinges on the twin methodological structures of more comprehensive *narratives* and '*cutting edges*', which provide the narratives with a consistent analytical structure. Within IMAGES, the analysis of policy making across sectors and scales of governance can be seen as a set, while the common perspectives applied in each set are termed cutting edges. The cutting edges, each theoretically informed, work together to build a critical analysis which, when applied across a narrative, leads to a comprehensive cross-sectoral, multi-level analysis. This analysis is held together by the *linking thread*, of a particular spatial idea, such as polycentricity, urban-rural relations or peripherality.

4.1 The construction and composition of narratives

In order to analyse the complex shaping of spatial policy across scales and sectors of governance, a diverse range of policy issues, arenas and processes needs to be investigated. IMAGES proposes to achieve this through the construction of narratives, which provide a way of focusing on the analysis of concrete cases. Narratives are therefore the higher architecture of the IMAGES framework, each providing insights into a specific question of European spatial policy-making. The unique perspectives provided by each of these different investigations can, through the gradual accumulation of sets, be synthesised to achieve a comprehensive picture of the emergent EU spatial policy field.

In analytical terms, the narratives are broad and comprehensive and each is constructed from a number of case studies across relevant sectors and scales of governance. Therefore, each case study needs to be conducted and integrated in a consistent way to result in a narrative. Clearly, to generate useful insights, the application of IMAGES relies heavily on the selection and composition of a narrative, which has to fulfil a series of criteria:

- The narrative needs to embody a multi-level analysis of spatial policy making in Europe, covering all relevant tiers of policy-making.
- The critical analysis that takes places within the narrative needs to pursue each of the cutting edges, which will be introduced later in this paper.
- Narratives should reflect the diversity of policy-making across Europe, by involving a comparative dimension, incorporating case studies from different countries/regions.

The construction of a narrative should also take into account the variety of different structures, practices and styles of policy making and implementation that give shape to a policy field operating in the EU context. These will include (a) top-down regulatory instruments (e.g. Environmental Assessment) and programmes (e.g. the Structural Funds), (b) the creation of new trans-national institutions and territories (e.g. INTERREG regions), and (c) the reality that policy making, and the responses to it, take place beyond the limits of public policy processes. All of this takes place in complex ways in individual territories, where EU programmes, policy instruments, and more subtle influences on existing territorial policies and plans, all interact and trigger responses by governmental and non-governmental actors.

The idea of IMAGES is to facilitate the examination of how policy making proceeds in this *milieu* of styles of intervention and response, either by closely examining individual policy instruments, by studying new institutional forms, by looking to see how non-governmental actors respond to emerging policy, or by examining the interaction between each of these in particular territories.

4.2 Cutting edges as the cornerstones of the critical analysis

The cutting edges are the key elements in the analysis of each set as they are designed to provide critical perspectives to give shape to the analysis of the policy making sets. The cutting edges therefore form the overall analytical framework for drawing conclusions on spatial governance in Europe. They do this by raising a series of critical questions about how particular EU spatial ideas are contested in policy making at different levels and in different sectors. Within the IMAGES framework, there are six cutting edges, as follows:

- Spatialisation of ideas
- Creation of EU policy agendas
- Construction of policy knowledge
- Multi-level governance
- Democracy and consensus-building
- Trans-national comparison and European diversity

It is clear that the cutting edges focus attention on the core spatial ideas themselves: the construction of new forms of policy knowledge giving legitimacy to these new ideas; agenda-setting across multi-level arenas; relations between scales and sectors of governance; the democratic and consensual nature of policy making; and the effects of Europeanisation on policy diversity and homogeneity across territories. Furthermore, they have diverse theoretical origins, which draw upon critical geography, political science, sociology, and planning theory (see Jensen and Richardson, 2004 for a more detailed discussion). They are theoretically informed in accordance with a perceived need to bring together understandings of the nature of governance, of its spatial dimensions and of the need for critical analysis and research, and are drawn together by an analytical thread that leads to critical insights into questions of spatial justice.

The following section explains in turn why each of these cutting edges is significant and necessary as a critical dimension of inquiry.

• *Spatialisation of ideas*

The first cutting edge in this research centres on the need to explore how spatialities are ‘constructed’ in spatial policy discourses. It is necessary in developing a methodology to explore how these construction processes might be conceptualised and analysed. The theoretical foun-

datations of this cutting edge are first discussed, and this is then followed by their specific application to the EU.

The approach taken (discussed more fully in Jensen and Richardson, 2004) follows the path emerging within planning research focusing on the relations between rationality and power, making use of discourse analysis and cultural theoretical approaches to articulate a cultural sociology of space. This draws on a variety of theoretical sources from critical geography to sociology to argue for a practice- and culture-oriented understanding of the spatiality of social life.

The approach hinges on the dialectical relation between material practices and the symbolic meanings that social agents attach to their spatial environment. Socio-spatial relations are conceptualised in terms of their practical 'workings' and their symbolic 'meaning', played out at spatial scales from the body to the global, thus giving rise to a 'politics of scale'. This particular discourse analytic approach moves away from purely textually oriented approaches to explore the relations between language, space and power, realising that '...story and imagined communities always have a spatial dimension and make a geographic claim. Neither authors nor readers always recognize this spatiality, but it is present nonetheless' (Ekstein and Throgmorton 2003:6).

This approach will allow analysis of how the new spatial policy discourse creates the conditions for a new set of spatial practices which shape European space, at the same time as it creates a new system of meaning about that space, based on the language and ideas of polycentricity and hyper-mobility. Furthermore, this also acknowledges the critical potential that lies within any effort to de-construct the notions and conceptions of space within the minds of planners and policy makers (Healey 2002:21). Empirical research within this cutting edge will focus on how key concepts are constructed, contested, reproduced and institutionalised across multi-levels of governance. But also how the 'spatial imagination' of policy makers and planners influence the way that spaces and places are framed.

But what do we really mean by this notion of the 'spatialisation of ideas'? First of all, we recognise the fact that spaces and places are linked to policy ideas and concepts, even without the articulating subject being fully aware of this. Thus, we would argue for a basic understanding of the 'European Project' as being inherently spatial. However (and this is where this cutting edge adds a new perspective) the policy ideas and conceptualisations at work in this institutionalisation of European integration also carry notions of space and place, and most importantly of the organisation of European territory. The central issue is then the socio-spatial relation understood in dialectic terms, since we may act within territorial boundaries and in different places. But we will also actively be adding some sort of spatial value to territories and places. Such explicit or implicit spatial valorisation is the essence of 'social spatialisation' (Shields 1992:7). Accordingly social agents 'appropriate' space by means of the social coordination of perceptions to ground hegemonic systems of ideology and practice (Shields 1992:46). Furthermore, we would argue that this is the core of the 'spatialisation of policy ideas' as the different concepts carry embedded notions of space, place and territory.

Part of such a 'spatialisation of policy ideas' has to do with constructing a particular narrative of Europe through the creation of place images, which for their part come about in a social process of simplification and stereotyping (Shields 1992:47). A process of collectively creating places through the construction of place-images amounts to a set of ideas in currency, gaining value through conventions circulating in a discursive economy. When a whole set of place images are brought together they form a 'place myth' (Shields 1992:61). On a very general level we would argue, that the rational ordering of the European territory is the spatialisation of the political notion of 'Europe as the cradle of Western Civilization'.

As a preliminary and tentative attempt to exemplify this line of thinking, we shall here look into a few key words or ideas that we would see as paradigmatic for the 'spatialisation of ideas' within the European Project. As stated previously, the point of departure for thinking about the spatialisation of ideas is an understanding of the European Project as inherently spatial. One should also however contemplate what sort of spatialisation this is to be. Or to put it rather differently: according to which underlying rationales are the projects spatialised? Gener-

ally here we find inspiration in Jensen and Richardson's concept of Europe as a space of 'monotopia' (Jensen & Richardson 2004). On the more specific level, ideas that we would argue are inherently spatial, include the notion of 'cohesion' as we find it embedded in the policies dealing with the 'holding together' of the European Project. Our second example is the widely used concept of 'polycentricity', predominantly referring to the spatial distribution, socio-economic specialisation and linkage of urban nodes within the European Union territory – the continental 'network city' so to speak.

– Monotopia and spatialising the European Project

If the European Project is inherently spatial in character then the grounding ideas behind the project may also be said to be spatial in their underlying rationale. However, the ordering of European space is also present within different policy fields. Here we argue that the multiple policies aiming at producing a European Union with as little friction to the flow of people, goods, ideas, and capital is the ordering principle that most predominantly expresses the spatialisation of the European project.

Thinking about a smooth space of European flows can be understood as an agenda for producing a Europe of 'Monotopia'. By this is meant the idea of a one-dimensional (mono) discourse of space and territory (topia/topos) (Jensen & Richardson 2004). The basic spatial organising principle is a discourse of 'Europe as monotopia', which is an organising set of ideas that looks upon the European Union territory within a single overarching rationality of making 'one space', made possible by seamless networks enabling frictionless mobility. In other words:

'... though the word "monotopia" will not be found in any European plan, policy document or political speech, this idea of monotopic Europe lies at the heart of the new ways of looking at European territory. We will argue that a rationality of monotopia exists, and that it is inextricably linked with a governmentality of Europe, expressed in a will to order space, to create a seamless and integrated space within the context of the European project, which is being pursued through the emerging field of European spatial policy. The future of places and people across Europe seems closely linked to the possibility of monotopia... A vision of monotopic Europe centres on the idea of a "zero-friction society" (Flyvbjerg et al., 2003; Hajer, 1999) based on an increasing harmonisation of mobilities of people, goods and information, leading to a new dimension of ambivalence' (Jensen & Richardson 2004:3)

We need however to transform this notion of the spatialisation of policy ideas into a more concrete and specific mode in order to better argue the case for a 'monotopian' Europe. This we will do by probing into the spatialisation of two key policy ideas: cohesion and polycentricity.

– Cohesion examined

The notion of cohesion policy has an inherently spatial logic to it as it concerns coherence not only in economic, social and political terms but also in a spatial and territorial sense. In the official EU policy discourse the issue of cohesion was originally concerned with a re-distributive logic, but in more recent times (not least since the Dutch EU Presidency in 2004) there has been a shift towards a more neo-liberal logic, with emphasis now being put on place-based development potentials. This also chimes with the Lisbon Agenda and the call for the increased economic competitiveness of Europe as a whole, but also of its component parts, from the local to the regional and national level. As argued by Rumford:

'The EU has, over the past decade, increasingly come to view cohesion not as an objective in its own right, but as a contributor to other aims, notably competitiveness.' (Rumford 2002:179)

This however simply means that, seen from the perspective of the 'spatialisation of ideas' we should think of the ordering of a single space of European flow as the spatial expression of

an economic rationale of global competitiveness. Similar conclusions can be reached when the ESDP is considered in relation to cohesion:

‘The overwhelming emphasis on economic development within the ESDP suggests that the EU’s spatial strategy will be played out in competition between cities and regions, between urban and rural, between core and periphery, and along growth corridors, with the marginalisation of social and environmental concerns. It is in response to these risks of fracture and injustice that the EU’s cohesion agenda has emerged. And it is here that we find the issue of territorial identity reflected in the new vocabulary. Springing from cohesion as a response to a territory in danger of breaking apart, the new language of territorial identity itself subtly articulates an idea of European unity.’ (Jensen & Richardson 2004:98-99)

The policy idea of cohesion thus links to territorial identity as well since the ‘imagined community of monotopic Europe’ has to have a platform for the articulation of the idea or vision of a level and coherent playing field.

– *Polycentricity examined*

The other key policy idea that we may want to consider in order to grasp the idea of a spatialised European project is the notion of polycentricity. This is a widely used concept in the general EU spatial policy areas (Faludi and Waterhout 2000). It is however also an example of a policy idea with a very wide semantic reach – making it ideal for less precise policy visions.

Taken at face value, the concepts refer to many centres as opposed to the classic one-centre model (‘monocentric’). The crucial issue is, however, the question of scale. Thinking about a network of cities as forming a poly-nucleated system gives the impression of a more equal spatial distribution of urban nodes or agglomerations. Significant differences however emerge between conceiving, in these terms, of a region within a nation state in Europe, or the whole system of cities and urban spaces in the European Union. Thus the concept is rather vague and polyvalent in itself.

The various dimensions of polycentricity at different geographical scales have recently been further investigated by a research project within the ESPON-framework (see www.espon.lu, Gløersen 2005).

The core ESDP policy goals centre on a policy triangle of economic and social cohesion, sustainable development and balanced competitiveness, as follows: (CEC 1999: 11)

- Development of a balanced and polycentric city system and a new urban-rural partnership.
- Securing parity of access to infrastructure and knowledge.
- Sustainable development, prudent management and protection of nature and cultural heritage.

Although the importance of social cohesion and sustainable development is highlighted, the rationale of economic competitiveness is nevertheless dominant (Davoudi 1999). This can be seen, for example, in the way that the notion of balanced regional development is linked to the issue of global economic competitiveness (CEC 1999, 20). The powerful ‘core region’ of Europe is framed as a model for other EU regions. This is pursued by the new concept of ‘dynamic global economy integration zones’ (CEC 1999, 20), which should be created in other regions to imitate and duplicate the prosperous core (CEC 1999, 20). This is in spite of severe problems with traffic congestion, which the ESDP recognizes do not contribute to the sustainability objective. For weaker regions, outside the proposed ‘dynamic global economy integration zone’, the approach is to widen the economic base and carry out economic restructuring (CEC 1999, 22).

The document does acknowledge the importance of rural areas, and stresses the importance of the development of a new ‘urban-rural partnership’ in which the rural areas are not seen as

the hinterlands or back spaces of the metropolises and cities (CEC 1999, 24). Having said this, the document again puts the emphasis on urban and metropolitan areas. This is particularly the case where the issue is one of linking cities by means of an effective infrastructure (CEC 1999: 26). The ESDP treats enhanced mobility as a critical priority for securing economic development within an overall spatial strategy of harmonisation (CEC 1999: 26).

Summing up, the issue of the spatialisation of ideas is important for investigating the territorial implications of concepts used for the governance of Europe.

Based on the analysis above, we can identify the following questions that we deem to be of particular importance for the understanding of spatialisation of ideas, and thus to be worthy of further research:

- How is space captured in policy ideas and reproduced in policy language and practice?
- How is the emergent path between rationality and power articulated?
- How are the material practices and the symbolic meanings that social agents attach to their spatial environment articulated?
- How does the new spatial policy discourse create the conditions for a new set of spatial practices shaping European space at the same time as it creates a new system of meaning about that space?

• *Creation of EU policy agendas*

Current European policies principally respond to the need to achieve a certain policy aim, e.g. in the field of territorial policy for instance, the need to support 'lagging' regions in order to achieve economic and social or territorial cohesion. This raises the question of who identifies these needs and aims, and by what means. Within the policy rhetoric, failing to answer identified needs may jeopardise the achievement of policy aims, leading to their construction as policy 'bottlenecks'. We may therefore understand the 'needs' put forward in the debate as socially constructed and contested 'bottlenecks' (e.g. ERT, 1991). Extremely simplified, we may say that policy making therefore relies on reaching a common understanding among the various stakeholders needed to legitimise or deliver the policy over the definition of bottlenecks. This is all shaped by conflict, negotiation, mediation, and the attempted creation of hegemonic discourses.

To be able to understand policy-making within a multi level governance environment, the roles played by various actors and their ideas in the social construction of bottlenecks needs to be clarified. As an illustration, we may think about how a particular spatial concept, such as polycentric development, is brought into the debate, how it reaches the status of an agreed aim or need, and thus becomes established as a hegemonic concept within the spatial policy discourse. This way of thinking can help us to understand how the contested definition of a single policy concept plays a part in the emergence of a new policy field.

Following Rumford (2002: 11) the EU is best conceived 'not as a nation state, or a multi-level polity, but as a multiplicity of agencies involved in the business of governing.' This also fits with the picture Kohler-Koch (1999) develops of the EU as a political entrepreneur: In creating networks in order to promote European integration, the Commission involves external expertise coming from both the private and the public sector. This aims also at ensuring that the actors, i.e. the governed, approve Commission proposals. Following that line, the Commission supports trans-national interest formations and plays an active role in 'networking', that is, building up trans-national policy communities around those policy issues that the Commission has an interest in promoting. This turns networking into a mode of governance, which builds on self-interested actors and aims at furthering a common interest in the process of negotiation. Consequently, a discussion on who defines and identifies current needs in spatial policies, and by what means, needs to look into the various policy networks at stake. These are to a large extent European policy networks, but can also be transnational, national or regional.

EU policy agendas are constructed and influenced by a multitude of stakeholders, involving the European Commission, the EU Member States, regions, local authorities, lobby organisations as well as external experts. Those stakeholders, or groupings of them, often find themselves involved in policy networks of various forms. Depending on the policy field in question the various actors have different roles and functions. Bottlenecks are promoted within these policy networks, shaping the EU policy agenda in a way that comes close to political entrepreneurship. Policy networks achieve this by crystallising around certain issues, creating new ideas and ways of thinking, seeking to establish hegemonic images (cf. Kohler-Koch 1999). Accordingly, an analysis of policy networks needs to be considered especially when discussing the role of various stakeholders in the creation of EU policy agendas.

What is required here then is an approach to examining the nature of European policy societies under conditions of increased integration and globalisation. Such a study needs to begin with the recognition that in the same way that the state has undergone many changes, society too has been transformed (Rumford 2002). Current developments in spatial policies illustrate how the role of the nation-state, as well as society, are currently in transformation. This requires a new conceptual approach to studying spatial development policies. Inspiration for this can perhaps however be taken from the field of network governance.

When discussing policy networks, one has to be aware that, although policy networks are broadly seen as a key feature of modern polities, different schools take different approaches to the issue. Marsh (1998) distinguishes between three main schools or concepts, namely the US, the British and the German:

US: focus on whether policy networks affect policy outcomes with a focus on the micro-level, dealing with personal relations between key actors rather than structural relations between institutions (Marsh, 1998)

British: deals with the development of network ideal types, with a focus on the structural aspects of networks and different types of policy networks (Rhodes 1990 and Marsh and Rhodes 1992).

German: focuses on policy networks as a new type of governance, which is distinct from two other forms, market and hierarchy, appearing mainly at the European level (Kohler-Koch 1999).

Kickert et al. (1997) define policy networks generally as stable patterns of social relations between interdependent actors, which are formed around policy tasks. Apart from this general view of policy networks, different types or states of policy networks can be distinguished (Marsh and Rhodes 1992). There are two extreme types:

– Issue networks

In order to form an issue network, the groups involved have to be recognised as having some interest in the particular area, since network membership is often quite open. Issue networks are often characterised by a large number of participants, fluctuating interaction and access for various members, the absence of consensus and the presence of conflict, while interaction is based on consultation rather than negotiation and bargaining. In general, issue networks develop easily in new policy areas where no groups have yet established dominance or where there are no established institutions to enable exclusion.

– Policy communities

Here the number of participants is limited. Access to a policy community is highly restricted and there is a high degree of consensus on policy aims. A policy community may even share a common ideology. There is a set of rules of the game, which actors have to abide by in order to gain entry into the policy community. These rules govern how participants have to behave and in what way they can be trusted. Laffin (1986) maintains that a policy community has a cognitive order, which he defines as an agreement on what passes for accepted knowledge in the community, and a normative order, which is an agreement on the values underpinning the community. Within most policy communities there are particular institutions, which share concerns central to the policy process. Membership in such institutions ensures access to the pol-

icy community. Falkner (2001) refers to corporatist policy communities as the most exclusive form of policy communities.

Kickert et al (1997) stress the fact that the concept of policy networks provides an alternative to both the central rule approach and to the multi-actor approach. In consequence policy networks are seen in the context of steering or influencing the strategic actions of actors. Therefore, Kickert et al (1997) coin the term 'network management'. Similar to this, Kohler-Koch (1999) characterises network governance as co-operation among all interested actors, instead of competition, involving joint learning processes. In her account, hierarchy and subordination give way to interchange on a more equal footing aimed at joint problem solving that will spread throughout the multi-level system, i.e. the various level of governance.

The discussion of policy networks leads in the EU policy sectors to the issue of comitology. Every government makes use of committees, the EU, however, is unique in its exceptional use of committees – the total number of members of committees is about three times the number of officials of the Commission plus the Council. Van Schendelen (1998) estimated the number of decision-making committees inside the EU machinery – in the mid 1990s – to be about 1,000 with around 50,000 representatives from the member states, divided more or less equally between the public and the private (profit and non-profit) sectors.

Generally, committees can be defined as institutionalised groups of specialised and representative people, i.e. the key terms are institutionalisation, specialisation and representation. The people brought together in such committees are not recruited as individuals, but as representatives of some social group, fraction, party, sector, region, country or another constituency. With regard to composition, the crucial point is that, where some established groups are included, others inevitably are excluded. Furthermore, Van Schendelen (1998: 7) points out that:

‘The big challenge of European integration is believed to be the building of consensus, stability and legitimacy. The reason is that Europe is almost a synonymy for strong difference and distrust between nations, regions and sectors.’

Indeed, by using committees, expertise is used as a tool for convergence and compromise, which leads us back to the question of who identifies the needs to be tackled by spatial development and by what means are they identified.

In the field of spatial policy-making, the degree to which committees are used is not only at manifest at the European level, but increasingly also at the transnational level. Where new entities, stretching over a number of regions located in different countries, are created, committees are perceived as the obvious decision-making bodies as there are no other bodies with legitimacy. Examples here include the Interreg IIC/IIIB co-operation areas, as well as transnational regions such as the various Euregios or the Øresund region (also labelled as a ‘global integration zones’).

When applied to EU committees, the behavioural approach implies that an expert group or a technical committee, having only weak or no formal power or procedural position, can exert more influence on the Commission, the Parliament or the Council than a management or regulatory committee (Van Schendelen 1998). At the same time the game also works the other way around, as Kohler-Koch illustrates in her theory on network governance, where the Commission is viewed as a political entrepreneur using committees and policy networks to increase its sphere of influence.

In general, networking appears to be a hybrid concept, involving loose structural coupling, where interaction within networks between autonomous actors produces a negotiated consensus as a basis for co-ordination. According to Benz (2002), loose structural coupling is realised by a shift in the logic of interaction between actors at different levels in different institutional arenas. The emphasis of this interaction is not on control or decision-making but rather on information exchange and persuasion, which in turn influences the debate and thus the creation of EU policies. At the same time, loose structural coupling is jeopardised by a dynamic of multi-level governance tending either towards an increasing fusion of powers of a great num-

ber of actors of institutions (coupling) or towards a separation of policies (decoupling). Accordingly, loose structural coupling describes a crucial moment in networking rather than a static situation. The concept of loose structural coupling not only highlights the momentum of instability in network governance, it actually shows why network governance may support the formal approach to European integration in the long run.

Summing up, the processes leading to the creating of EU policy agendas are crucial for understanding how a multitude of actors are shaping policies.

Based on the analysis above, we can identify the following questions that we deem to be of particular importance for the understanding of agenda setting at EU level a worthy of further research:

- Who identifies the needs and aims for European policies, and by what means?
- How are the various ‘needs’ articulated in policy debates as socially constructed and contested ‘bottlenecks’?
- What is the role of stakeholders in the creation of EU policy agendas?

• *Construction of policy knowledge*

This third cutting edge focuses on how policy knowledge is constructed. This is significant as it is through the application of planning tools that the world is analysed, and information is gathered by recognised methods. These methods create knowledge, thus reconstructing and representing a particular version of the world and its problems and opportunities, and therefore providing the crucial support for policy and decision-making.

In the cutting edge above we discussed the multitude of actors involved in the creation of policy agendas. Each of these actors tries to underpin their position with evidence and knowledge, selected on the basis of their own political and cognitive interests. This leads us to the question, from where is this knowledge or input into the policy debate derived?

The importance of selecting one technique over another is that each is imbued with its own characteristics: drawing from certain data types and forms, lending themselves to certain forms of analysis, and therefore possibly addressing planning policy issues in particular ways. This is an area that is becoming increasingly contested, although it appears that there is little critical work currently being done here. The political importance of these techniques has been recognised, for example by Throgmorton (1992), who argued for the need to explore the political deployment of policy evaluation tools, and in the specific literature discussing the political nature of evaluation (e.g. Karlsson, 1996).

It can be argued that EU spatial policy cannot exist without a sound basis for analyses and interpretation referring to the whole of the European territory, and focusing on:

Urban systems, infrastructures, and natural and cultural heritage.

The spatial impacts of major socio-economic phenomena (e.g. information society).
on the spatial impacts of sectoral policies.

(CSD, 1999).

Along the way, certain forms of knowledge will be deemed appropriate, while others will be seen as less useful. Creating boundaries of knowledge will be vital in institutionalising European spatial planning as a rational, evidence-based policy field. These new forms of knowledge, which are generated by new (or refashioned) techniques of spatial analysis, are found to be demarcated by shifting and contested boundaries between what counts as legitimate and illegitimate knowledge. The definition of these boundaries becomes vital in institutionalising European spatial planning and in framing, transforming or excluding certain forms of knowledge,

such as radical environmental considerations or indicators of social equity, when they threaten to destabilise smooth policy making by throwing up uncomfortable 'facts'.

Jensen and Richardson (2004) chart shifts over time and across policy arenas in the ways that knowledge was framed first to trigger a policy response, and then to sustain the case for political support and investment in major projects and policy ideas that amount to a fundamental restructuring of the fabric of, and relations within, European space. They uncover a rocky trail of debris, as 'knowledge' is hacked and hewn in quite rough ways, into new shapes: from the dramatic problem framing of missing infrastructure and missing institutions; through the convoluted attempts to prove an economic case for the trans-European networks; to the need to integrate strategic environmental concerns following the activities of environmental pressure groups; and finally towards a potentially more holistic field of territorial analysis to accompany the new field of European spatial planning.

The tools of analysis are thus bent into new shapes in order to deal with the specific challenges of understanding the possible benefits and negative impacts to Europe of, for example, new motorways and urban patterns. New 'knowledge' about these impacts has been used to mask uncertainties over how policies and programmes will impact on the 'real world'. Each of these knowledge forms requires a different type of planning tool to institutionalise it, and it is the examination of the contested nature of these tools that helps us to understand the different ways in which the EU spatial project is being rationalised at the micro-levels of policy practice and at different levels of governance.

Often, the battle over the tools of policy analysis is not apparent. Tools are either handed down through established policy, practice and tradition, and so within a particular policy process, the selection of the tools of analysis may appear to be more of an academic debate than an exercise in power relations. However, in the construction of a new policy field the selection of methods may become a crucial site of opposition. Research therefore turns to focus on battles over the process by which certain knowledge – the vital basis for rational planning – is created (or legitimised) as the 'proper' basis for planning across Europe.

It is clear that within the various policy sectors the selection and use of analytical tools in building policy knowledge has been strongly contested. In the case of TEN-T for example, heated power struggles ensued over the selection and deployment of evaluation instruments to justify the necessity of new infrastructure projects and address environmental concerns. This analysis leads to the conclusion that economic criteria will be used to justify EU intervention to enable infrastructure projects to be progressed, whilst environmental knowledge will support decisions rather than carry any binding power. The imposition of these boundaries of knowledge ensures that the economic value of international mobility will be more significant in influencing decision-making than the 'value' of environmental impacts. The question then is how such boundaries are metamorphosed into the more integrated work of the ESDP and the broader field of spatial policy.

As EU spatial policy becomes institutionalised, boundaries are being redrawn between the 'valid' and 'invalid', and between what is considered to be 'reasonable' and 'unreasonable' knowledge. For example in the ESDP, TEN-T are articulated as potentially contributing to environmental benefits. The high level of investment in high-speed rail is argued to be a means of encouraging a modal shift from air over distances up to 800km, as well as from road on certain corridors. Of course this claim is not based on any overall Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of TEN-T and the discourse of mobility contained in the ESDP is clearly driven by economic interests. The utopian ideal of frictionless mobility is articulated through the twin aims of increasing accessibility and efficiency, to be implemented through the construction of a trans-continental high-speed network of roads, railways, sea and airports, reaching into every region through local networks. But how is this ideal pinned down to what we can know about movements in European space?

The new policy language of European space has to be rationalised, supported by an elaborate framework of evidence, so that progress towards elusive concepts like 'balanced spatial development' and polycentricity can be measured. The development of the system of spatial

analysis within the ESDP framework therefore warrants careful scrutiny, as criteria such as 'spatial integration' and 'peripherality' become subjects for analysis. This is one of the crucial (but difficult to track) steps between rhetoric and institutionalisation, where policy ideas become embedded in new frameworks for compartmentalising our understanding of the world, and articulating or foregrounding certain ways of looking at it. Once we analyse certain movements between certain places as a matter of everyday planning work, and use those measurements to show that these places are more 'integrated' than they used to be, then the reproduction of the core idea that integration requires more movement which is all central to European progress, is more or less assured. For example, the question of improving accessibility between regions is likely to be informed by gathering data about inter-regional traffic movements by different modes. The assumption here is that more movements will equate with increased accessibility. Assumptions of this type lead the analysis towards a focus on knowledge that supports the underlying rationality of the ESDP, that increasing mobility is 'a good thing', without integrating the complex effects of such movements that are recognised at a rhetorical level. It is in the institutionalisation of the rhetoric, through new practices of generating knowledge, that such differences become clear.

Richardson and Jensen (2004) find that the political and institutional setting of knowledge tools shapes their scope, timing, methodology, and ultimately their impact. Frameworks for economic and environmental analysis were shaped by the discourses of the single market and political integration, by inter-institutional politics, and by the actions of interest groups. Appreciating their constructed nature helps us to understand the dangers in regarding them simply as rational scientific tools. These attempts to shape and control the evaluation process can be interpreted as struggles over the embedding of particular values, knowledge and power relations. The adoption of particular approaches and techniques in evaluation creates boundaries of inclusion and exclusion of knowledge, which potentially establishes bias in favour of a particular set of interests.

An important dimension in building a narrative of power/knowledge is the way that the need for the rationalisation of policy shifted in response to changing political agendas, creating risks and uncertainties for policy making. How are the everyday tools used by planners constructed such that they can stabilise the policy process in response to economic, environmental, and spatial uncertainties?

The attempt to create an integrated field of spatial policy creates a new force for a spatialised rationality that has several important effects. It may pull together into one analytical framework (Territorial Impact Assessment) many of the contested issues, which can be seen as an attempt to find a rational settlement of the tensions and conflicts within and across previous knowledge boundaries. Is this likely to be significant in permanently shifting the way that spatial impacts are understood and integrated into policy making? This is an open question. We seem, then, to be on course for a new and particularly difficult period in the rationalisation of spatial policy, replacing the previous tensions between environment and economy with a new *frisson* between discrete analysis of these impacts, and the attempt to harmonise them within a new spatial agenda. This seems to reinforce questions about the role of the tools that might perform this complex task – are they attempting to provide better information, or are they part of a process of ordering and normalising the field of spatial planning by rationalising conflicts? A clear problem in the use of similar approaches (such as the use of integrated assessment in the transport sector) has been how conflicts are represented, buried or traded-off within these tools.

Will new approaches to spatial analysis and knowledge creation simply re-embed the values of the single market? Will it suppress and conceal how difficult trade-offs between impacts are being made? Will it increase the prospects for transparent, accountable and participative spatial planning? An initial response here is that the new knowledge tools are beginning to provide the required rationalisation of the new discourse of European space: frictionlessness and polycentricity are the new 'given', while analysis is becoming grounded in these new norms of spatial development. The idea of 'community benefits', once inserted into new tools, legitimises the

analysis of transnational activities and the physical intervention that is inevitably triggered by this analysis.

From this perspective, the development of TIA, and the implementation of SEA, become key areas for future scrutiny. The work of the emerging network of European spatial observatories, as it considers how 'problems' such as accessibility and urban-rural relations should be factored into Territorial Impact Assessment, also demands critical scrutiny. This means ensuring that those working in the laboratories within which the new knowledge tools are being bench tested, are challenged to reflect critically on the core question: is a hegemonic discourse of frictionlessness and polycentricity simply being embedded in the new tools?

Alongside this examination of the definition of knowledge boundaries as a vital strategy in institutionalising European spatial planning as a 'rational, science based policy field', it is necessary to examine the ways in which spatial policy making is being conditioned across Europe by these developments. To what extent is everyday planning at different scales, through processes of Europeanisation, subtly but fundamentally reshaped to reproduce the spatial ideas of the European project? Will spatial planning increasingly revolve around these organising, epistemic concepts, shaped by EU 'high' and 'low' politics and by the politics of interest, or will policy making at different scales repeat these struggles between multiple and multi-scale interests and values?

Summing up, the analysis of these processes of selecting evidence is important features in the understanding of how 'spatial policy' is established as rational, evidence-based policy field. The following research questions for further study have been identified:

- What new knowledge forms and fields of knowledge are being constructed with regard to European space?
- Which forms of knowledge are included/excluded in the policy making process? How is this knowledge framed or presented?
- What forms of knowledge are appropriate and legitimate, and which are less so?

• *Multi-level governance*

A full analysis of European policy arenas requires the assessment of different levels and spheres of governance, with a variety of actors (representing different policy sectors, private and public interests etc.) involved in negotiation processes. This empirical reality has been taken onboard by researchers in their quest to construct analytical approaches and concepts for further theory-building (See, Pierre & Peters 2000; Marks, Hooghe et al., 1996; Wallace, 1996; Scharpf, 1997; Eser and Konstadakopulos, 2000; Jensen and Richardson, 2004).

The MLG approach has been useful in that it has in many cases provided a better tool for conceptualising and analyzing the processes of integration and in particular, their implications for the spatial and territorial dimensions of the EU governance structure. There are however problems inherent in this approach, particularly in relation to its traditional perceptions of democracy and accountability, but also as regards the epistemological choices inherent in such approaches. While multi-level governance is likely to create (or reflect) a more flexible system of governance, creating further possibilities for sub- and transnational actors for instance, it largely leaves aside the question of whether this will create a more responsive and democratic structure for the European Union. Thus one needs to differentiate between a process describing European governance as it currently exists and another that describes how it may look in the future, providing certain political choices are made regarding its form. Whether MLG can actually be seen as a new theory of European integration remains to be seen, though its analytical value and policy relevance make it relevant also for the debates within territorial and spatial policy.

The three key assumptions of the MLG approach relate to the decision-making process in the current form of governance in the European polity. (See for instance Hooghe and Marks

1997.) As such, these are designed to question some of the assumptions of the state-centric intergovernmentalist paradigm of European integration, focusing on state actors and their nested interests. First, it is assumed that decision-making is shared by actors at different levels rather than monopolised by state executives. European institutions have shared responsibilities for decision-making and thus they have independent influence that cannot be solely derived from the national governments. Second, collective decision-making among the actors in the EU framework involves a loss of control for individual state executives. Unanimity decisions are however usually applicable only to major policy decisions, often concerned with the future scope of integration. Third, political arenas are seen as interconnected rather than nested. Sub-national actors are not merely nested within states - they also create transnational associations and networks. States no longer monopolise links between domestic and European actors.

Marks (1993) argues that there has been a stretching of the vertical governance axis which now transcends the local, regional, national and European in 'a system of continuous negotiation among nested governments at several territorial tiers' (p. 392). Clearly both a definition and an understanding of how ideas are variably constructed within this multi-level, multinodal and multinational sphere of governance are crucial in exploring the networks and interdependencies within these relationships, not least through the distribution and exercising of power.

Thus within multi-level governance several different critical structural dimensions of the question can be identified:

- (a) Vertical dimensions and the possibility of convergence or mismatch between policies at different scales and levels.
- (b) Horizontal issues: Integration or divergence between sectors over the construction and implementation of different policy ideas.
- (c) Beyond governance: Relationships between public, private and other sectors as policy ideas are contested in policy-making and implementation.

Within these dimensions, it is important to understand the different modes of governance in play, with an eye to Weiler's ideas of transnationalism, intergovernmentalism and infranationalism (Weiler, 1999). The role of the state actors and central governments remain central, though they are influenced by the pressures faced both from below and from above. Weiler's 'infranationalism' presents the 'middle-level' between the traditional political intergovernmentalism and more legally based supranationalism. Questions of relevance here would also include the emergence of the European constitution and its implications for spatial policy, even if these influences remain limited by the fact that there is no European spatial policy *stricto sensu*.

Summing up, the analysis of these governance processes provide us with a more comprehensive view of how 'spatial policy' emerges, is outlined on decision-making on multiple scales and is implemented and assessed within a complex governance system. The following research questions for further study have been identified:

- What are the vertical dimensions and the possibility of convergence/mismatch between policies at different scales and levels?
- To what extent is there horizontal integration or divergence between sectors within the construction and implementation of different policy ideas?
- What are the relationships between public and private actors as policy ideas are contested in policy making and implementation?
- What are the different modes of governance in play? (For instance transnationalism, intergovernmentalism and infranationalism). What interests are served by each of these modes?

- *Democracy and consensus-building*

The fifth cutting edge considers questions of democracy and consensus in relation to EU spatial planning. The concerns about a democratic deficit, so amply illustrated and debated in the academic field of politics have also been outlined in the rhetoric of the Commission itself, for example, reflected in the White Paper on governance (CEC, 2001), which was constructed around principles of openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness and coherence. This section covers issues surrounding decision making processes and the challenges they pose to democracy, how public involvement is structured and facilitated in terms of ‘who, where and what’ questions, and what discourses are dominant within these processes.

The theoretical background for this cutting edge draws on a traditional liberal political science understanding of democracy, which sees democracy as having a number of dimensions. Different traditions draw on diverse philosophical and political rationales, but nonetheless, there are a number of key elements that should be present within any ‘democratic’ system. First, there should be some degree of direct citizen input into policy making and decision making. Secondly, citizens should have some way of holding responsible those to whom, in a modern society, they inevitably have to delegate (some of) the responsibility for making decisions ‘on their behalf’. Therefore, the notions of openness or transparency could be argued to be a necessary condition for these two fundamentals of the democratic process.

In addition to questions about openness, transparency and accountability, the question of legitimacy is also important. Work by Scharpf (1999, 2001) and others, highlights the need to address both the input and output dimensions of democracy in order to ensure legitimacy in a democratic decision-making system, as well as the difficulty in achieving democratic legitimacy consisting of autonomy on the one hand and accountability on the other in a supra-national multi-level governance structure. This is not only a problem for the EU, but is a common concern for the post-industrialist welfare states more generally (Scharpf 1999: 26-27). It is closely connected to the distribution of power and authority in policy-making, as the European (as well as national) distribution of responsibilities and power are (re-) negotiated in different policy areas. It is important however to recognise that different groups, at different levels and in different places each have different experiences and political norms upon which to draw, thus leading them to context-specific evaluations in terms of both the input and output elements of the political/decision making system.

It is important therefore that we do not take a stand on the classic representative/participatory democracy split. This is because the fundamentals of the political systems of the member states, and of the democratic institutions of the Union, are representative democratic in nature, but that at all levels this is (increasingly) supplemented by decision making processes which directly involve other stakeholders. Some of these can be seen as more ‘participatory’, in that they bring in actors as individuals or through civil society organisations, into decision-making. However, simultaneously – and not always separately – there has been an increase in other non-traditional styles of policy making that raise questions concerning democratic legitimacy, namely the rise of partnership approaches across many western democracies. As highlighted by Rhodes:

‘A change in governance has emerged, that of increasing partnership working between agencies. This has arisen as a corollary to the dispersal of authority away from traditional government structures to create a more fragmented system of governance, and the resulting need to coordinate policies and programmes lying within the remit of separate, independent agencies.’ (Rhodes, 1997)

‘The “partnership principle” enshrined in EU policy (at least with regard to the structural funds) is perhaps the most pertinent example of this shift. It has been defined as the process of close consultation between the Commission, the member states concerned and the competent authorities designated by the latter at national, regional, local or other level, with each party acting as a partner in pursuit of a common goal.’ (Regulation (EEC) 2052/88)

Despite the argument about not taking an *a priori* normative stance on how participative a good democratic process might be we do recognise the powerful arguments that participation only makes sense when interpreted as having a strongly discursive, deliberative element. In order to embed the legitimacy discourse in the public domain, we might also want to introduce the deliberative aspect: the very different democratic criterion that legitimacy lies in 'the ability or opportunity to participate in effective deliberation on the part of those subject to collective decisions' (Dryzek, 2000:1) or 'that outcomes are legitimate to the extent they receive reflective assent through participation in authentic deliberation by all those subject to the decision in question. (Dryzek, 2001:1)

This raises the crucial issue of how to judge legitimacy. As has been argued by Schmitter, legitimacy is the shared expectation amongst actors in an arrangement of asymmetric power such that the actions of those that rule are accepted voluntarily by those who are ruled, legitimacy thus 'converting power into authority' (Schmitter 2001: 2). The discursive element can be seen as a (possibly localised) value which forms part of Scharpf's 'input' legitimacy criteria. At a more general level we can draw on Beetham's argument that we can judge political systems more generally, not simply in terms of how much support they in fact have, but how justified this is. He argues that:

'For power to be fully legitimate, then, three conditions are required: Its conformity to established rules; the justifiability of the rules by reference to shared beliefs; the express consent of the subordinate, or the most significant among them, to the particular relations of power'. (1991: 19)

As our concern here is with democracy within the spatial policy sphere, we are thus necessarily concerned with both the extent and limitations of legitimacy within this particular policy area, as well as with the sources of power and authority, control and consent that underpin legitimacy or its limitations. Recognising, as Beetham does, that legitimacy and its conditions are all socially constructed, and therefore subject to power like any other discursive construction, we also need to take into account the dynamics of power structures and relations within spatial policy.

The above discussion of changing styles of policy making across Europe brings us to the importance of governance as a key concept in discussions of democracy and legitimacy. In the globalisation debates in particular, as well as increasingly within spatial policy, governance has emerged as one of the umbrella concepts. It is therefore important to recognise the normative and theoretical background through which democracy has emerged as a prevalent concern within this discourse of spatial governance.

The popularity of the 'governance' concept may be explained by two reasons: its imprecision and its political instrumentalism. As has been noted by Rhodes amongst others, 'governance' has multiple uses, based on the policy area as well as on policy orientation, alternatively referring to either the minimal state, corporate governance or new public management, as well as 'good governance'; socio-cybernetic systems or self-organising networks (Rhodes 1996). Secondly, the political 'usefulness' of the concept (perhaps even 'political correctness'). Governance has become a all encompassing concept for international organisations (from the World Bank and the IMF to the EU) with high political expedience, encompassing those principles and political ideals which are generally accepted as universal, though also at times fluid and difficult to measure and assess in concrete terms, such as openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness and coherence (e.g. CEC 2001b). It therefore becomes increasingly interesting to closely consider the implications and interests behind the governance debates within the EU as they relate to territorial/spatial policies.

Governance can then be seen as an interesting area of study for those concerned with the changing nature of democracy. Here the EU has been instrumental in both changing the nature of democratic decision-making, but also in providing a normative and political agenda for

‘good governance’ within the European context. If we expect the question of democratic legitimacy to be relevant in the European context, we must also expect there to be a shared understanding of what legitimacy within the European polity could mean and what the criteria for legitimacy are or indeed could be.

Our contribution to spatial policy and democracy will thus depart from the principle that within the more novel forms of governance, there should be greater attention on representative or participatory democracy as a means of increasing levels of effective influence, accountability, transparency. Here we also come to the issue of deliberation – to what extent is there open, public deliberation – and if there is not, why not? Is spatial policy in fact an issue where there is ‘demand’ for deliberation, or has there been already been a ‘managerialisation’ of the process by which spatial policy has been increasingly outlined in terms of a technical exercise? Olsson for instance notes that there has been ‘a lack of public opinion making and competition about what ‘good’ regional development should be’ (Olsson, 2003: 289). This brings deliberative democracy and accessibility questions once again to the forefront, and the question thus emerges as to whether there has been a lack of politicisation (or even a conscious de-politicisation?) of spatial policy issues.

Deliberation is an important part of building a consensus within a political community or polity. A view of democracy as based on public deliberation presupposes that citizens should, and indeed are, capable of deciding through discourse what policies and laws they ought to pursue. The openness of the process is naturally a necessary prerequisite for this to occur, but this is not sufficient as such, as the capability issue needs to be addressed as well. As participants in the processes of public deliberation, members of the community in question respect that each of them possesses ‘deliberative capacities,’ the capacities needed to participate in an environment where reasons are publicly exchanged and the ability to mould solutions and achieve consensus on policies developed from the exchange of such public reasoning (e.g. Cohen 1997, 72).

Deliberative democracy equally presupposes some degree of plurality among discourse participants, participants in a discursive process having diverse interests, convictions, values and ideals. Although members share a commitment to the discourse as a means of problem-solving and policy-making, they do not necessarily believe that any one set of interests, convictions, or ideals is necessary for sound decision-making. In order for decisions that are reached through deliberation to be legitimate, the discussion should be open, ongoing and independent. Its members should expect it to continue into the indefinite future, rather than be connected to any one policy decision or process, limited in time. This is to ensure that the decisions made through discourse are open to future review and revision, when necessary. ‘Free deliberation among equals’ (ibid.) is the ideal and the participants in the public discursive process provide the source of legitimacy in the decisions they make as a body.

On the question of ‘what makes the outcome of a deliberative discourse legitimate?’ theorists have not reached common ground. Some (e.g. Cohen) believe that the process is paramount – that any decision reached through a proper deliberative procedure is, by definition, legitimate. Others, however, believe that legitimacy is achieved only through proper deliberative procedures that also respect some set of substantive values embraced by a given society. This shared set of values is inherently more difficult (perhaps even impossible) to define in cyberspace. Deliberation in cyberspace will potentially bring together people from many different countries, with many different sets of shared values. Here also the question of enabling and mobilization become paramount: it is not sufficient for the processes of deliberation to be accessible and open to everyone, they also need to mobilize and empower as many participants as possible. In connection with the more ‘digital’ forms of democracy for instance it still remains the case that the predominant trends within urban governance in Europe, such as the policy of ‘enabling’ do little to transgress the traditional roles and power structures of civic participation: it is often the political and technocratic elites that participate as they alone generally have the sufficient means and competences to do so. As has been argued in connection to various e-democracy or e-governance initiatives for instance, what is most decisive for their success is the

concurrent reform of the decision-making and policy-making processes. Even if citizens have the ability to access, comment upon and put forward their own views in the wider local and regional policy-making process, this does not imply a qualitative, let alone paradigmatic shift unless the decision-making and policy-making structures and processes are responsive to the citizens' views and initiatives and citizens are genuinely empowered within these new policy contexts and political processes.

There seems then to be a surprising gap in the area of EU decision-making and policy implementation viewed as governance and its relationship with traditional notions of democracy. According to Olsson (2003), there is a dearth of constructive systematic empirical studies and:

'the democratic renewal and policy network/governance themes are rarely explicitly combined in empirical research. In network and multilevel governance research, aspects of democracy are often unproblematised. Democratic institutions usually constitute some sort of background context of policy networks. Issues of democracy and accountability are often treated separately from issues of implementation (Dimitrakopoulos and Richardson 2001; Newman 2001). This may be fruitful and necessary in many ways, but the problem is that we lack research and understanding about how the policy-making and implementation of the EU function from a democratic point of view.' (Olsson, 2003: 284)

He identifies five 'democratic paradoxes', which collectively lay out some practical ways in which the criteria of democratic legitimacy are broken:

1. *Multi-level democracy paradox*: Development policy moves within the policy-making world and democracy stays in traditional sites and modes.
2. *Vertical democracy paradox*: Public officials formulate goals and make priorities, while politicians take part in project development.
3. *Economic democracy paradox*: To get structural fund support you need to have resources and, if you have, you will also be able to 'buy' some democratic influence.
4. *Horizontal democracy paradox*: Co-operation between a large number of actors has a tendency to produce elitisation, i.e. elite pluralism.
5. *Multi-demos paradox*: Co-operation between a large number of democratic institutions makes it difficult to decide who is responsible and who should be held accountable.

(Olsson, 2003: 295-6)

The IMAGES approach will be to look at the policy making processes themselves and to ask specific questions about the role of one particular group of actors – the citizens of the member states – and how they and their interests are brought into the policy and decision making processes. Therefore, IMAGES will use analytical categorisations such as those provided by Olsson, though in addition also looking at specific cases of administration, decision-making and the management of spatially relevant policies, analysing these and seeking to draw conclusions that are interesting both on a case-specific and more universal level.

Here the following key questions for further research can be suggested:

- What forms of public involvement can be identified at each level during the policy-making process/process of spatialisation?
- What is the policy making process which frames this public involvement and what are the dominant discourses?
- What is the quality (and degree) of public involvement? To what degree is the policy making process open and accountable?
- Does consensus-building involve deliberative practices?

- *Trans-national comparison and European diversity*

Until now, the heterogeneity of European spatial policy making has mainly been addressed in terms of the policy sectors and governance levels involved. There is, however, a further relevant dimension of diversity, namely the differences between various European countries and regions. As a result of differences in culture, policy-making and conceptualising space, contributions to European or trans-national platforms take different forms depending on the country, i.e. an actor's background. Different spatial, cultural and political contexts give rise to different impulses, which are differently perceived in trans-national contexts (Böhme 2002, CEC 1994, CEC, 1997). In this regard, it has to be kept in mind that spatial planning is an eclectic field linking numerous aspects, which is highly influenced by e.g. a country's history, geography, cultural traditions, political orientation, prevailing ideology, state of economic and urban development, constitutional government structure or legal constitutional framework. In more concrete terms, arrangements concerning the responsibilities for spatial planning, centralised or decentralised planning, reactive or proactive planning or regulatory or discretionary planning, as well as the planning or decision environment shape the differences between various planning systems.

Thus planning for Europe draws on the variety of planning styles existing in Europe, and at the same time it depends on the reactions coming from the planning communities in the various Member States, as in the end it is they who decide the fate of planning for Europe. This dimension of European diversity can be crucial for understanding the creation of EU policies and the dynamics of trans-national institutions.

Currently, there are two dominating typologies of planning systems in Europe, one of which takes an instrumental, and other a more territorial approach.

The EU Compendium of Spatial Planning Systems and Policies (EC 1997:36-37) identifies four major traditions of spatial planning in EU Member States:

- *The regional economic planning approach* follows a very broad understanding of spatial planning which is related to the pursuit of wide social and economic objectives, especially in relation to disparities in wealth, employment and social conditions between a country's different regions. Accordingly, this approach relies on a strong central government having an important role in managing development pressures across the country and in undertaking public sector investments.
- *The comprehensive integrated approach* is characterised by an understanding of spatial planning, which is rooted in a systematic and formal hierarchy of plans from national to local level and a co-ordination of public sector activities across different sectors. In contrast to the regional economic planning approach, this arrangement focuses on specifically spatial co-ordination rather than on economic development. Two sub-types have been identified, one related to federal systems and the other characterised by strong local authorities, which share responsibility with the central government.
- The tradition of *land-use management* has an understanding of (spatial) planning which is focused on the narrower task of controlling the change of land use at strategic and local levels. Accordingly, regulation is the main instrument for ensuring that development and growth are sustainable.
- The *urbanism tradition* is strongly influenced by architectural aspects and concentrates mainly on issues of urban design, townscapes and building control.

The other approach developed by Newman and Thornley (1996) identifies five 'planning families', taking into account both legal and administrative styles: with Nordic, British, Napoleonic and Germanic families, as well as a family formed by the countries of the former Eastern bloc. The planning families defined by Thornley and Newman provide an appropriate point of departure, as they are abstract enough to enable us to distinguish certain groups and further

differentiation, based on the other criteria, describing differences within each group, is then possible.

- *British*: The legal system of the British family is easily identified, as it stands in isolation from the others. Its Common Law has been gradually developed from decision to decision as case law, showing a considerable empirical slant as compared to enacted continental law. Ireland and Britain are also described as centralised unitary states; although local authorities do play a significant role (EC 1997:39), they are not as strong as those in the Nordic countries, for instance. As far as planning philosophy is concerned, this family, and especially the UK, puts a strong emphasis on the process side restricting the aspect of preparation of an end state plan or document. In general, the UK system is planned and not plan-based, i.e. it is not a zoning system as in many other European countries (Zetter 2001). Tewdwr-Jones and Williams (2001) underline, furthermore, that there is an overriding obligation on the central government to provide national co-ordination and consistency, while the majority of planning functions are implemented at the local level.
- *Napoleonic*: The Napoleonic Family is named after the legal style introduced by the Code Civil (1804) also known as the *Code Napoleon*, which provides the model for all codes of private law within this family. (Zweigert and Kötz 1989:74) As noted previously, it is mainly based on the use of abstract legal principles and theoretical debates and tries to foresee questions of possible dispute in advance in order to prepare a complete system of rules. The administrative structure of these members of the Napoleonic Family is rather centralised, according to Newman and Thornley:
- ‘...within this system local government is not simply the local agency of central government but contains local representation albeit with strong central controls. This system was extended to Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Greece.’ (Newman and Thornley 1996:33)
- The administrative organisation of the planning approaches in this family is more difficult to grasp, as is documented in the EU Compendium (EC 1997), although there is a strong common approach based on the legal system. Generally speaking, their main distinguishing characteristic, in contrast to the British Family, is that this planning does not accord well with a market-led approach, and that central governments are allotted considerable importance. This could also explain the stronger politicisation of planning in these countries as compared to the Germanic Family.
- *Germanic*: The Germanic Family regards its legal traditions as very closely related to the Napoleonic Family, as there are few distinctions between them. Generally speaking, the Germanic approach was developed later and is more abstract and intellectual. The main characteristic of the Germanic Family is the significance of a written constitution, which allocates distinct power to various levels of governance with each level fully responsible. The members of the Germanic Family have clearly federal governmental systems, where the federal government level and the ‘regional’ level each have autonomy and legislative power in specific spheres. (EC 1997:39) The federal government structure and administrative responsibility create a need for horizontal negotiations and for discussing subsidiarity. The importance of the federal character distinguishes this family from the previous ones.
- *Nordic*: The close interrelationship of the Nordic legal systems can be explained by the historical, political and cultural ties between them. Nordic legislation bears clear traces of the lack of an entrenched feudal system with its concomitant administrative system, as well as the lack of major trade towns/commercial centres and their bourgeoisie, all of which characterise Nordic countries. Cultural/historical developments have also affected

the relatively recent division of power. This is one reason for the rise of unitary governments (EC 1997) with strong local authorities. The role of local authorities is strongest in Member States with a unitary government structure with a policy of decentralisation. Denmark, Finland and Sweden come into this category. (EC 1997:40) The Nordic family has probably gone furthest in the process of decentralisation, with spatial planning at the national level reduced to a minimum and regional planning only weakly represented. The emphasis lies very much on the municipalities, even if the precise shaping of this competence differs from country to country (Böhme 2001). There is, nevertheless, a strong relationship between the central government and the regions. Central government usually has its own agency operating at the regional level to implement national policy, staffed by personnel appointed by the centre. At the same time, although local authorities have been reorganised into larger units for reasons of efficiency, local self-government has a long history stemming from the strength of peasant politics and in some cases the far-flung expanses of the Nordic countries. Local self-government is seen as one of the cornerstones of Nordic constitutions. (Newman and Thornley 1996)

Fuller typologies are currently being developed within the context of the various research projects under the ESPON-framework, one of which focuses on governance issues, while another centres on the application of European spatial policies in various areas of Europe. There is also a project on scenarios for Europe, which seeks to apply a typology and develop a cartography of spatial planning and territorial development. (On these projects see www.espon.lu)

Considering the variety of planning traditions and planning families in Western Europe, the question arises as to whether this diversity will remain. Indeed in spatial planning circles there is an ongoing debate (cf. Böhme 2003, Schmitz et al 1999, Williams 1999, Jensen 1998, Healey & Williams 1993) as to whether this diversity is going to disappear in the process of European integration, harmonisation of policies and single European market:

‘Drawing on the experiences gathered from the Nordic countries and the concept of discursive European integration, harmonisation as regards the topics dealt with in spatial planning is a likely prospect over the next decade. However, European spatial planning will not result in the harmonisation of planning systems. Rather, if at all, such harmonisation may occur as an indirect, long-term effect of the Single European Market.’ (Böhme 2003:27)

Summing up, in order to chart the dimensions referred to in the other cutting edges, we need to have a broad comparative understanding of the European diversity. Here we have identified following questions for further research:

- What are the differences in culture, policy-making styles and ways of conceptualising space between European countries and regions?
- How does this diversity lead to differences in policy-making and how does it shape the outcomes of the policy process?
- How is European diversity put at stake when EU policies are implemented and mediated within different spatial, societal, legal and administrative contexts?

5. Operationalising the IMAGES approach

This section of the working paper seeks to illustrate a way of exploring the application of the IMAGES framework to empirical examples. As outlined in the previous chapter, IMAGES will make use of narratives as a starting point for empirical analysis. These will be constructed in two interconnected ways, as follows:

- 1) Analysis of *selected EU policy instruments*, examining how they carry or articulate particular spatial ideas, which are then mediated as they are applied within specific territories.
- 2) Analysis of *spatial strategy making in different territories*, to explore how EU spatial policy ideas are mediated.

A complete narrative consists of a case study, which is supposed to provide complementary insights into the Europeanisation of spatial policy making across a multilevel field. Conducting both types of cases can allow a rich picture to be built up across sectors, scales, and territories, of how spatial policy ideas are being constructed and contested across the emerging policy field.

A key criterion in selecting cases is the explicit recognition of the linkages between EU and national/regional/local policy-making, and the empirical cases described in this section all have this multi-level dimension, in one form or another.

In this chapter we have collected a set of initial ideas for narratives in order to illustrate how IMAGES can be applied. The character and depth of the cases varies.

SINGLE INSTRUMENT CASES	TERRITORIAL CASE
Trans-European Transport Networks Regional innovation systems Strategic Environmental Assessment Water Framework Directive	UK: South Yorkshire sub-region

The choice of the territories and policy instruments is based on finding cases that reflect the mutual, though asymmetrical, interaction and interdependence between the key policy instruments within spatial policy. Furthermore, the policy instruments can be found in all of the countries selected, though as argued elsewhere, they will have differentiated expressions and impacts on the various national, regional and local scales.

In order to apply the IMAGES framework, the perspectives explained in the previous chapter will be applied to each narrative, namely: the spatialisation of ideas; the creation of EU policy agendas; the construction of policy knowledge; multi-level governance; democracy and consensus; trans-national comparison and European diversity.

This chapter sets out the findings of the empirical work to date, which is more advanced in some areas than in others (some of this is based on previous research), while other preliminary findings simply represent ideas for future work. In what follows we present examples of single policy instrument narratives and then a more elaborate example of a territorially based narrative, each designed to test the structure of IMAGES.

5.1 Single Policy Instruments

In the following we will briefly present ideas on how to apply IMAGES in the field of various European policies. For this we address the issues surrounding Trans-European Transport Networks, Regional innovation systems, Strategic Environmental Assessment and the Water Framework Directive.

Trans-European Transport Networks (TENs)

This case involves an in depth multi-level analysis of the Trans-European networks. The trans-European networks represent a strategy for the restructuring of European space according to the integrationist vision, as a patchwork of national networks of transport and communications are transformed into a pan-European system, which identifies links, nodes and corridors of European significance. This case asks critical questions with regard to how the interests of spatial justice are being mediated and contested in the development of TENs policy and its application through multilevel governance arenas in the Northern EU periphery.

Of particular interest here is the contestation of policy ideas and their implementation at the EU institutional level, focusing in particular on the reviews of TENs policy since 1996, particularly in the 2001 EU White Paper on Transport and the more recent review of priority projects of European interest. Here the struggles to shape policy – by framing TENS as offering certain spatial changes, by identifying certain corridors or project as ‘priorities’, by making and legitimising claims to knowledge through spatial analysis – will be analysed as they are played out through the multilevel policy process involving EU institutions, national governments, regional and local institutions and lobby groups. This requires a multi-level approach, to examine how ideas are transmitted, reproduced and contested through governance structures in the implementation of TENs.

The IMAGES framework can be applied in the following way:

- In depth analysis of the TENs policy instrument using cutting edges. This will build on previous research on the construction of the TENs policy instrument (Richardson 1997; Richardson 2000).
- Analysis extends from EU institutions to the territorial cases. At the EU level it will explicitly examine how the refinement of TENs policy in the context of the ESDP has taken account of spatial concerns. This will include an analysis of the integration between the ESDP and EU transport policy (e.g. the 2001 Transport White Paper, and the definition of ‘projects of European interest’). In particular, the relationship between TENs and the idea of polycentric urban development, and also the question of how the ESDP’s target of parity of access relates to TEN. The multilevel focus will also include a detailed analysis of the application of TENs within the UK
- Analysis of how dimensions of spatial justice are mediated or contested in the application of TENs. Spatial development dimensions will be analysed by focusing in particular on how TENs play a part in changing constructions of space, for example by changing the ways that relationships between cities within and beyond territories are articulated in regional planning and development strategies, and in the development of long distance corridors. Accessibility and exclusion dimensions will be examined by analysing how the peripheral location of territories in relation to the European core are addressed through TENs, and also how TENs change patterns of accessibility within territories. Environmental integration will be addressed by analysing claims about how TENs will affect the distribution of environmental ‘goods’ and ‘bads’ within and between territories.

Regional innovation systems (RIS)

Regional Innovation Systems and the promotion of industrial renewal and innovation capacity on the national and increasingly on the regional and local levels are key elements in achieving the aims of the Lisbon and Gothenburg strategies. The ability of SMEs to innovate and pursue policies in line with the European strategies is highly dependent on the ability of RIS stakeholders' (regions, actors, organisation) to adapt to external pressures and changes and to act strategically. Their ability to learn and pursue proactive policies is highly dependent on their institutional capacities and flexibility. Therefore, industrial development and innovation capacity is always, within a given regional or local context, highly dependent on institutional adaptability. In particular, the risk of institutional inflexibility and 'lock-in' in traditional industrial complexes is high.

Such a narrative may focus on the ability of European policy initiatives to influence the path-dependent regional contexts. The cases provide a ground for identifying the institutional and organisational limitations and possibilities to pursue European goals for urban and industrial renewal within path-dependent regional contexts. Such a study needs to build on analyses of development strategy documentation and interviews with the actors participating – in an institutional context available in each national case – in the actual process of:

- (a) identifying the issues of strategic planning
- (b) negotiating on the integration of European, national, regional, and local policy goals

The analyses might address the capabilities of the strategy designers to identify vulnerabilities associated with potential 'lock-ins' but also opportunities that may emerge from the path dependent development for finding space for innovative action, spin-offs and eventual changes of developmental trajectories. The case study will thus analyse the compatibility of the chosen single instruments while embedding the discussion in the search for a new, innovative and knowledge governance centred logic for European, peripherally located industrial regions' development and survival.

The European Water Framework Directive (WFD)

The Water Framework Directive is an example of a policy adopted by the EU aimed at achieving sustainable development and influencing spatial development. Implementation of the directive began in 2000. The goal is to ensure that co-operation within river basin districts and the creation of river management plans will deliver 'good water status', contribute to sustainable water use and secure water resources for future generations throughout the EU.

The objective of this case study is to analyse what happens when a new method of handling natural resource water use is introduced. The introduction of the WFD across the EU implies a confrontation between existing legislative and planning systems. The two different systems must however adapt to each other since the systems differ markedly with regard to aims and instruments as well as in their administrative division of territories. The question thus arises, how will existing planning systems relate to and integrate the demands put forward in the WFD and how will the suggested new geography suit existing divisions of geographical planning entities both within a given national context and as regards the demand for transnational co-operation? Such a narrative might therefore examine how existing planning systems relate to and integrate the demands put forward in the WFD, within national and transnational settings.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

The purpose of the SEA Directive (which had to be implemented in member states' legislation by 21st July 2004) is to ensure that the environmental consequences of certain plans and programmes are identified and assessed during their preparation and before their adoption. Hence the directive introduces new demands on spatial planning in the member countries.

In relation to this policy instrument IMAGES can explore the connection between the effect of the application of the SEA directive in municipal planning and the current practice of

SEA application and the integration of environmental issues in municipal planning. This will be examined within the framework of the national implementation of the directive; the existing institutional framework, legislation, and administrative levels, the planning system and municipal planning practice.

5.2 Territorial Case of South Yorkshire

Empirical work on the territorial case is more advanced than on the single instrument cases. Brief background information is presented about the case, then the findings from the empirical work to date are set out, followed by an overview of future empirical work to be carried out.

The sub-region of South Yorkshire is physically located at the centre of the UK, lying 260 kilometres north of London. The area is an EU NUTS II area within the UK standard region of Yorkshire and Humber. The sub-region has had no single formal democratic or administrative body since 1986, when South Yorkshire County Council was abolished. The urban form of South Yorkshire has for long consisted of the city of Sheffield (population of circa 400,000), the three smaller urban centres of Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham (each of approximately 100,000 people) and the former coalfield at the geographical centre of the sub-region (population circa 150,000).

Coal and steel industries dominated the sub-region for over 200 years and in economic, social, cultural and environmental terms it could be seen as a traditional industrial area, as seen elsewhere in Europe and North America (Benyon and Hudson, Cook). During the 1980's and 1990's however, the sub-region (like many other centres of manufacturing and production) suffered from acute problems, as it underwent de-industrialisation and economic restructuring. In 1971 the coal and steel industries together provided direct employment for 121,000 people but by 1996 this had declined to 15,000 and whereas the sub-region had thirty-three active collieries in 1981, by 1992, this had been reduced to only three. Between 1971 and 1997 South Yorkshire lost 187,000 industrial jobs and 60% of all its industry (GOYH, 1997). Also during this period, 147,000 full time jobs were lost and were replaced by 52,000 part-time jobs. A period of high unemployment and attendant social problems during the 1980s and early 1990s contributed to a low GDP *per capita* measure relative to Europe as a whole. In 1997 the sub-region was deemed to contain not enough employment, too much low paid employment, too few businesses and too many businesses that did not create high 'value-added' products or services (GOYH 1997).

Although the high and rapid growth in producer services characteristic of the UK economy as a whole did not occur in South Yorkshire at a rate or scale as in other cities during the 1980s and 1990s, by 2002 the sub-region provided mainly service employment. This was heavily dependent on national and local government functions, educational institutions, health care and personal consumer services such as retailing. The steel industry still survived, with an output as high as in previous decades as a result of new investment and the high 'value-added' nature of the specialist steels produced. The coal industry had however all but disappeared. Two decades of UK government and EU funded regeneration resulted in the growth of new sectors such as the cultural industries, the modernisation of some infrastructure, re-development of brownfield and vacant land, an increase in business formation rates and skill levels, the expansion of the two universities and the attraction of new investment such as call centres. In 2002 the sub-region had an industrial profile close to the UK average and a more diversified economic base than previously, but 'growth sectors' were still under-represented (GOYH 1999).

Before 1999 the NUTS II area was designated as an EU Objective 2 region, and was a recipient of RECHAR and RESIDER EU funds. These measures to bring about the diversification of traditional industrial areas, alongside national and local regeneration interventions (for example enterprise zone, urban development corporation, City Challenge and Single Regenera-

tion Budget funding), meant that public policy in the area had been dominated by economic development discourses and actions throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

To an extent this 'entrepreneurial' style of governance was reinforced by the growth of regionalism in the UK. In the locale of Yorkshire and Humber this has been manifested in the creation of a voluntary, multi-institutional regional partnership in the 1990s (The Regional Assembly for Yorkshire & Humber- RAYH), and a strengthening of central government's presence in the regions with the establishment of multi-purpose 'Government Offices in the Regions' in 1994 (GOYH in the case study region). These two region-wide agencies took on the responsibility for preparing the Regional Planning Guidance. The emerging institutional arrangements were given additional impetus with the establishment of regional development agencies in all the standard regions of England in 1999, 'Yorkshire Forward' in this case. The management boards of these agencies consisted of regional stakeholders, appointed by central government. The confounding and fluid structures of the multi-level governance that characterise UK regeneration practices during the 1990s were therefore equally prevalent in the sub-region (Herrschel and Newman 2002). The democratically accountable municipal and national levels of formal government were inter-meshed with a complex web of quangos, agencies and other public-private and collaborative partnership bodies. Debates and uncertainties about the future economic role of the sub-region were mirrored in contested and confused realms of governance.

Governance was to undergo a further significant shift when the sub-region was awarded Objective 1 status by the European Commission for the 2000-2006 period. The Programme of projects to be grant-funded by the EU was managed by a 'Directorate'. This was established by, and in turn was accountable to the GOYH. However, the investment was delivered via six 'Priority Partnerships', reflecting the structure of the Programme and each being a partnership of stakeholder interests related to the 'Priority'. Most of these involved the four local authorities, but also other agencies such as education and training institutions, business support institutions etc. The 'Bottlenecks Study', undertaken by consultants, was commissioned by the Objective 1 Directorate in 2001, and was managed by a Steering Group drawn from the Priority 6 Partnership that had responsibility for infrastructure and transport.

The EU Structural Funds support was predicated on the premise that the sub-region had a shared and collective economic strategy that required support. This was not the case in the mid-1990s when initial moves were first made to gain Objective 1 designation. As a result, the four local authorities set up the South Yorkshire Forum (SYF) in 1997 to provide a voluntary-partnership vehicle to oversee the preparation of a shared vision and strategy for South Yorkshire. Later this partnership was to 'oversee' the Objective 1 Programme, and it expanded its membership beyond the local authorities to include other economic and social stakeholders. It was the SYF that commissioned consultants to undertake the Spatial Study in 2002, and set up a multi-level steering group of agencies to manage the Study.

Empirical work to date: Applying the cutting edges

Evidence is presented from two policy studies that were undertaken in the sub-region over the last five years— 'The Transport Bottlenecks Study' and the 'South Yorkshire Spatial Study (SYSS)'. The Bottlenecks Study sought to identify where the lack of investment in major transport infrastructure was inhibiting local economic development, whilst the SYSS formulated perspectives on future polycentric urban development.

In order to apply the cutting edges, narratives from recent spatial policy formulation and practices in the territory of South Yorkshire are used to provide a critical perspective on the spatialisation of ideas, a perspective given shape by the six IMAGES cutting edges.

The spatialisation of ideas

During the study period, the territory of South Yorkshire, like many urban and former industrial areas in Europe and the UK, was seeking a new future, having experienced significant

structural changes in the local economy. The future ambitions of the sub-regional governance structures were given articulation in the SYF strategy, which sought:

‘To build a balanced, diverse, and sustainable high growth economy in South Yorkshire by 2010, recognised as a growing European centre for high technology manufacturing and knowledge based services, offering opportunities for the whole community’ (SYF 1999:1)

The ideas underpinning the regeneration policies and practices in South Yorkshire were clearly established on principles and constructs from dominant economic development models of the time. These models were given expression within UK Government policy discourses, but also explicitly, EU discourses and advocated an international trade and indigenous regional development paradigms, moving away from dependent models, based solely on policies to attract foreign direct investment or those which sought to redistribute economic activity through public intervention.

In the South Yorkshire territorial policy making set examined here, these ideas were articulated explicitly within the Objective 1 Programme for EU Structural Funds support. The Programme gave expression to economic development ideas, such as support for clusters and high-tech industries, the information society, enterprise support, skill acquisition etc. However, at the start of the Programme in 2000, neither the EU nor the UK government took a view, or expressed normative ideas about the spatial construction of the South Yorkshire territory. As an illustration, transport investment was only seen as a means of enabling and unlocking economic development potential. As such, potential impacts of the Programme at the South Yorkshire scale were regarded as *aspatial*, since outcomes were measured in terms of jobs, GDP and investment in the sub-region. The ‘Bottlenecks’ study was an attempt to convert these general benefits into a framework of investment and action, but it was largely unable to do so in the absence of explicit or effective spatial organising ideas for the territory. Indeed, the SYSS was the first attempt in the sub-region to link economic development goals to specific spatial impacts and desired outcomes. In a break from the prevailing ideas of territorial competitive advantage, which had become locked into the normative policy constructs of the four local authorities, the collaborative partnership of SYF choose to consider the idea of polycentric urban development, a concept that borrowed heavily from EU spatial policy discourses, in particular the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP).

As previously stated, polycentric development was seen within the ESDP to offer a new perspective for the peripheral areas of the EU territory and was seen as a way of:

- Off-setting centralising tendencies in the distribution of economic growth.
- Counter-balancing the negative effects of competition.
- Addressing current limits on environmental and infrastructure systems.
- Establishing a basis for voluntary collaboration in territorial governance.

It is crucial to ask what such general desires mean in a specific context, such as South Yorkshire, since the reproduction of these spatial constructs is likely to be contested as the ideas frame new territorial meanings, capacities and identities.

Critical to the application of the polycentric urban development idea is the issue of scale, raising contested interpretations of the idea as a normative and explanatory concept. The SYSS draw boundaries around South Yorkshire and used models of polycentric urban development to explore changing local geographies of economic activities within those boundaries. The Study however failed to take broader regional and EU wide views into account. Such spatial scales had the potential to critically unpack the relationship between the Objective 1 Programme and UK regional policy, and the gap between the aspirations of the regional economic strategy and the reality of local conditions. Instead the broad idea of polycentric development was interpreted through prevailing development discourses— strategic economic zones; urban

centre functionality; transport investment (the Bottlenecks Study); accommodating growth and sustainability. The SYSS thus became concerned with dealing with equity between the four urban centres/ municipalities of South Yorkshire, and inequality or spatial justice at the scale of the sub-region in relation to the European territory was not articulated.

The Study did not deal with questions of mobility and the extent of the sub-region's interconnections and spatial interrelationships. This may reflect a basic policy tension between the EU organizing ideas of polycentric development and frictionless mobility (see Jensen & Richardson), but may also reflect more immediate policy conflicts, largely left unarticulated in prevailing discourses: such as between urban renaissance goals and the principles of sustainable development; and between the desire to limit the growth in journeys whilst offering mobility and access to all. These tensions were seen in the contested processes involved in preparing the SYSS and Bottlenecks Study, and in the numerous sub-regional policy documents. A conflict given direct expression in the desire to attract substantial new economic investment to the already congested motorway corridors and junctions; in the contested future of the coalfields, quickly developing as a car-based, out-of-town, non-place urban realm largely supporting call-centres and personal consumption activities; and the simultaneous demolition of social housing in areas of low market demand alongside public subsidies for private house building on brown-field sites.

Thus, the initial exploration of the South Yorkshire territorial set begins to show how this particular cutting edge allows the analysis of spatial policy discourses and practices that are shaping European space. It begins to unlock what new meanings of space are being constructed. Notions of polycentricity and hyper-mobility are highly contestable as both explanatory and normative spatial ideas, but already their use in constructing policies and notions of space is becoming reproduced and institutionalized. More research is clearly needed into the influence these have on policy makers and planners at all scales of territory and levels of governance.

The creation of EU policy agendas

The previous section has shown how EU ideas became incorporated within the spatialisation of local development policies within South Yorkshire over the period of the late 1990s. But why was a spatial study undertaken in South Yorkshire at this point in time? Why then has the study and policy-making processes taken polycentric urban development as a core organising concept? How were these policy agendas, with their strong EU influence, created?

Reference is made above to the ESDP, and it might be assumed that the policy responses in South Yorkshire were simply the execution of this higher-level policy agenda. However, this is not necessarily borne out by events, although the publication of the ESDP and support for it by the UK national government did play a role in the creation of the agendas. The ESDP was a non-binding document, and spatial planning an activity where the EC had no formal competency (Faludi, 2000 Williams, 1996). Furthermore, in the absence of sub-regional planning policies, the Regional Planning Guidance – RPG11 – was a critical statement of spatial policy towards South Yorkshire, but the first drafts of RPG11 were criticised by central government for not taking sufficient account of the ESDP, or European spatial policies. Furthermore, there was no specific national guidance on polycentric development until 2003 (ODPM, 2003). Thus, the top-down implementation of these ideas about polycentric urban development, downwards through a hierarchy of agency structures, does not provide an explanation of the South Yorkshire events.

A fuller explanation might be found at the 'local' level, with ideas emanating from a 'bottom-up' response: the creation of policy at the local authority and individual municipality level, below the sub-regional scale. It was in fact at this level that the main formal spatial planning powers and authority resided. However, the European spatial ideas explored here were not formulated or given articulation in the formal policies of these local authorities, as expressed in each of their unitary development plans. Indeed, the SYSS concluded that formal, local planning policies lacked synchronicity with regional physical and economic regeneration strategies

and implementation, and lacked consistency between the four local boroughs. Instead we find that the 'trigger' that led to the creation of a polycentric urban development agenda was the Mid-term Review of the Objective 1 Programme, when the national and regional context to spatial policy had changed significantly following the election of a Labour UK government in 1997. Whilst this appeared to be a single event, in practice the creation of a spatial agenda, and one based on particular EU ideas, arose from a combination of traditional territorial politics and informal governance networks.

The initial Objective 1 Programme was negotiated between the agencies in South Yorkshire and the EU over a period of time from 1997 to 1999. Within these many negotiations, an area of contestation was the urban form of South Yorkshire and the translation of this into economic development outcomes. The EC was of a view that the sub-region represented a city region, with Sheffield the core driver of economic growth. Within this scenario, the city would have explicitly benefited more in terms of grant aid *per capita* than the adjoining boroughs. A position politically unacceptable to the individual local authorities, who argued that South Yorkshire was a multi-centred sub-region based on the four urban municipalities. A compromise was negotiated, resulting in the *aspatial* nature of the Programme, leaving the contested spatial politics inherent to the sub-region unresolved. This 'unfinished business' was seen to be an important issue for the SYSS to address by agencies and actors who had a stake in its formulation.

Even then, the introduction of spatial ideas from the ESDP did not occur through formal mechanisms. The SYSS found that the infiltration of EU spatial ideas had entered very few policy mindsets of statutory planning agencies and actors in the sub-region. Instead the polycentric idea, explicitly written into the SYSS consultants brief, was introduced through ideas of technical officers, and these were not planning staff, but rather actors involved in the EU measures, such as the structural funds and attempts to become involved in INTERREG. Agendas here were much more partnership based, and reliant on complex informal networks rather formal channels of authority, accountability or responsibility. European agendas appeared through activities to lobby Brussels for funding, and not explicitly through spatial policy formulation or debate. We now begin to see the ESDP filtering down into national and regional thinking, less through a hierarchy as the EC might assume, but rather through a diversity of processes and arrangements, some simply giving articulation to long standing and contested territorial politics.

The construction of policy knowledge

One purpose of this cutting edge is to examine how the discourses of European spatial policy and space require the construction of new knowledge forms and fields of knowledge. In particular it seeks to identify the contested boundaries between what counts as legitimate and illegitimate knowledge; what forms of knowledge are deemed to be appropriate, what methods and techniques of policy analysis are seen as less useful or misleading? Within the South Yorkshire 'narrative' we can ask what happened in the two spatial studies to make them work, how was the rationality of the processes defined? The analyses have already suggested that much of the knowledge in the sub-region was created and given expression outside formal planning processes. Both studies used national consultancies working with local academics that entered into, what were essentially, communicative based-relationships with the 'client', which in both cases consisted of multi-agency partnership groupings. Knowledge construction was also, to a degree, shaped by these contractual and 'privatised' relationships.

The two studies shared a number of common approaches to 'knowledge construction'. Both were commissioned on the basis that additional data collection was not necessary. Instead the consultants were expected to draw upon existing sources of data from previous or ongoing studies, and from the stakeholders themselves. The Bottleneck Study became closely linked with the national government's multi-modal study (SWYMMS), and the Spatial Study relied heavily on analyses prepared for the Single Programme Document and investment plans in the sub-region. In this context it is hard to see how new, radical or alternative forms of

knowledge might have been given any status. Instead, legitimacy was largely achieved through the confirmation of existing fields of knowledge. Both Studies required the consultants to undertake consultations. Consultations that were not held with the public or a broad range of interested parties, but in small focus groups and workshops with technical representatives from stakeholder agencies. This knowledge was supplemented by detailed interviews with key actors from the same agencies. These consultations were used to collect information, evidence, and opinions to once again confirm existing analyses. The SYSS did also involve more overtly political knowledge fields, captured and created by interviewing leaders and chief executives of the local authorities at key stages of the study.

A cursory examination of the outputs from the two studies suggests quite different forms of knowledge were created. The 'Bottlenecks' report is dominated by the presentation of numeric and quantified assessments of a series of transport bottlenecks and associated infrastructure investments. The report concludes by advocating three transport bottlenecks 'for which there are potential solutions', and provides a basis 'to assist decision making'. In contrast, the Spatial Study outlines and assesses six models of future urban development within a fifteen to twenty year period. The Study was seen as a way of 'providing a framework in which a range of key issues can be identified and analysed as a first step towards an agreed spatial strategy or plan for the sub-region'. Broad spatial diagrams and policy concepts are used, and instead of recommendations, the report ends with a number of preferred spatial development options and principles for future strategy formulation.

The Bottleneck Study knowledge fields were generally created through a closed technical exercise. Institutionally the Study results were 'owned' by a Driver Partnership, a partnership that represented interests largely outside the core objectives of the Programme. The research was always seen as a study about prioritizing expenditure and projects that were already being formulated within each of the stakeholders' activities. It served the purpose of giving quantifiable values to these existing proposals, and did not attempt to provide a solution to the sub-region's extensive transport and accessibility problems. The Study said virtually nothing about demand management or current national/regional transport policy agendas. It was driven by the desire of local agencies to deliver jobs and investment, a view given legitimacy by the spending imperatives and targets of the EU grant regime. The study simply identified the 'bottleneck projects' eligible for funding by the Objective 1 Programme, and then applied a weighted-criteria assessment to prioritise these. There was great debate about these weightings, and they were ultimately negotiated between the managing stakeholder group and the consultants.

The Spatial Study ultimately became 'owned' by an elite political group, a voluntary collaboration between the leaders of the four local authorities in South Yorkshire, a political partnership of convenience. At the initiation of the Study, the multi-level agency Steering Group had no strong collective or shared view of what they wanted from the commissioned project. The published Brief broadly called for data collection, spatial analysis and the generation of options. However, as the Study progressed it became agreed, through mutual understanding and shared beliefs, that the study had to be about ideas. It had to be able to address fast changing spatial and economic development policy agendas and frameworks. So the final document became largely a set of perspectives to shape policy debates in the future. Perspectives heavily influenced by the notion of polycentric urban development, knowledge of which was largely introduced and given credence to by the participating academic partner. These perspectives were assessed against qualitative criteria, criteria that were the outcome of negotiations between the client and consultants.

What rationalities were created, refashioned or reinforced by these processes? The formal policy fields of spatial planning in South Yorkshire were largely left seemingly unchallenged and uncontested. The Bottlenecks Study never escaped the narrow technical, science-based rationality of traditional UK transport planning. Its failure to add spatial meaning to the transport/economic development relationship was one reason why the mid-term assessment reported that measures under Priority 6 'have not been implemented in the way foreseen by the

original programme' (p16). The Spatial Study also seemingly had little influence on refashioning prevailing planning rationalities in the sub-region, but the political and multi-level agency ownership of the spatial ideas inherent in this Study require examination within those governance structures. After, but not as a consequence of the Study, new spatial planning practices were proposed by central government (Regional Spatial Strategies to be introduced in 2006), and a national report on Polycentricity published in 2003.

Multi-level governance

As described earlier in this paper, the defining feature of the case study was the absence of any formal, democratically accountable government structure at the sub-regional level. Instead this 'governmental territory' was occupied by higher and lower level government agencies, voluntary collaborative partnerships and non-governmental organizations, such as the South Yorkshire Coalfields and South Yorkshire Forest partnerships.

The spatial policy debates addressed by the two studies were conducted within a governance sphere constructed mainly around 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' agency arrangements intermingling and contesting influence over the territory. Hierarchies had an important influence, but the governance relationships played out during the Spatial and Bottleneck studies continually challenged the authority of these, and also sought to explore horizontal dimensions to the spatial ideas being considered. The hierarchical arrangements were clearest within the statutory spatial planning process, whereby each of the four local authorities had a duty to prepare unitary development plans (UDPs) for their areas, and each had to take account of central government guidance prepared for the national and regional levels. However, the four UDPs failed to adequately provide a coherent rationality for a 'bottom up' approach to sub-regional spatial policy; and 'top down' guidance was also weakened by a lack of spatial specificity and implementation powers, thereby effectively creating a vacuum in the governance of spatial policy at the South Yorkshire territorial scale.

The Spatial Study sought to address this territorial discontinuity directly, and achieved legitimacy by establishing a consensual position in relation to emerging national and regional spatial policies (e.g. urban renaissance) and local practice (e.g. local authority targets for the development of brownfield land). The study also sought to build horizontal linkages, mainly to those agencies responsible for strategic economic development, transport and housing policies in the sub-region. The Bottlenecks Study was undertaken within the same territorial governance structures, and sought to shape a largely *aspatial* field of governance dominated by sectoral transport outcomes, in which hierarchical relationships were stronger influences. These again were contested and required construction within the South Yorkshire territory through negotiation. However, the higher levels of authority at the national scale dominated, in particular the central government commissioned South and West Yorkshire Multi-Modal Study (SWYMMS), but also the national agency arrangements (e.g. the Highways Agency and Strategic Rail Authority), and beyond governance relationships (privatisation). These powerful agency structures largely determined the outcome of the Study's search for legitimacy and influence.

The expected hierarchical process of developing spatial policy failed to deliver ideas, rationales or a legitimacy that the governance structures of South Yorkshire could put into effect. The act of commissioning the SYSS and participating in the study represented a significant attempt to fill this vacuum in multi-level policy making. Although both studies were undertaken within governance structures explicitly structured by EU levels of governance, albeit mainly based on a grant-regime, the narratives presented here were unable to provide evidence to adequately explore these, or national levels of influence. Another research project might shed light on these, and may benefit from examining the notion of gatekeepers (Bache 1998). These may have played critical roles within the negotiations that interlink the local-sub-regional-regional-national-EU processes involved in the territorial set of South Yorkshire.

Democracy and consensus

The narratives thus far have shown how policy formulation processes were given legitimacy by consensus building within the various partnership and collaborative bodies that were involved in the attempts to regenerate South Yorkshire. This was unlike the formal and statutory planning processes in the sub-region, which were required to undergo strictly defined public consultation, and be given approval within the formal decision making procedures of democratically elected local authorities. The absence of such wider public debate and scrutiny, and instead the careful selection of agencies and organizations to be included within the policymaking fields were characteristic of both studies.

The Bottleneck Study saw attempts at constructing a consensus between stakeholders. A process articulated by technical officers, mediated through the Objective 1 Driver Partnership under the chairmanship of one of those stakeholders, the SYPTE, responsible for, and an advocate of public passenger transport in the sub-region. Thus, parallel to the study, South Yorkshire Forum had prepared a transport strategy, led more by accessibility agendas, better public transport, and labour market issues. From this perspective, it was argued that people want buses, and the constituency of the former coalfield wanted increased accessibility. The lead partner, the SYPTE was however not empowered to bring this about. The consensus within the Bottleneck Study had to be constructed from three positions: agency/funding – the matching of Objective 1 grant funds with other financial commitments; mode/projects – the selection and trade off between outcomes from different investments in road, rail, bus etc; and a political geography – given expression by the relative allocation of funds between, and the possible benefits in each of the four local authority administrative areas. It was a consensus constructed around immediate, and largely pragmatic agendas and interests, while the arenas created for debate were highly exclusionary. Furthermore, authority over key decisions for some of the possible major projects resided with national bodies, the Highways Agency and Rail-track, which were privatized or next step agencies that were not democratically controlled. These were ‘beyond’ governance relationships, and presented major sites of conflict within the planning of public investment in the UK at this period of time.

In a similar manner, the Spatial Study largely used exclusive *fora* for debate, and sought to build a consensus within multi-agency partnerships, made up of technical officers. However, the involvement of elected council leaders in this process has already been mentioned, and as a result the spatial policy ideas and discourses contained in the Study were to extend into highly contested and politicized arenas. These in turn shaped and gave a different form of legitimacy to consensus building. During the preparation of the Study, consensus was constructed around the idea of polycentric urban development, and this was give expression in an agreement to consider development models that prioritized future investment in particular spatial areas of the sub-region. Each of these largely favoured the existing urban centres, and in particular Sheffield, Rotherham and Doncaster. This was to cause concern to the fourth local authority, Barnsley, which at the same time was having to secure local political support for its proposed ambitious regeneration of the town centre, thereby diverting priority and possibly resources from the former coalfield areas. This spatial dichotomy was given further expression and grounds for conflict within the Spatial Study. Since the Study did not lead to a choice between models, the council leaders were able to accept certain spatial organizing principles without having to resolve the dichotomy that resided in the possibility that development in the coalfields might be undesirable in terms of environmental and economic sustainability, despite the strong and immediate social case for taking action in these areas. Further studies of this ‘narrative’ would be well served by a deeper exploration of the way in which local or community groups sought influence and a contribution to these processes.

Transnational comparison and European diversity

The South Yorkshire sub-region is a European territory characterised by patterns of low economic growth, and deeply ingrained uneven spatial development. It is a traditional industrial area that has gone through major economic restructuring. Many other regions are experiencing

the same structural conditions, linked to changes in global economic patterns. These areas may possess different actors and political circumstances, but similar historically based structuring conditions (e.g. East Germany or Northern France). In such territories, investment and economic growth are not occurring at the level and rate that people want. So how do the EU polycentric and frictionless agendas condition policy formulation in areas of such low demand? How have EU normative ideas about governance influenced politics and decision making in territories such as these?

It might be expected that the spatialisation of overarching EU policy ideas, in this case polycentricity, which was underpinned by the fundamental spatial organising principles of frictionless mobility and balanced regional development, would have led to a new expression and meaning of space in South Yorkshire. As a consequence, new debates about achieving greater, or lesser spatial justice would thereby be constructed. But what difference has the introduction of EU spatial ideas made to the spatial debates within the territory? The narratives presented here suggest that the Spatial Study did prompt a spatialisation of economic development debates at the sub-regional scale. This was also happening in a few other areas in the UK, either within peripheral city-regions (see INTERREG funded study on Glasgow and Edinburgh), or as an element of strategies seeking to accommodate urban growth (see ODPM studies of Milton Keynes, Cambridge etc). Normative views on the governance of these territories need to be set against longstanding debates about the nature of spatial planning and metropolitan government, and the diversity in these approaches (see Ache 2000; Salet, Thornley and Kreukels 2003)). The case study was certainly undertaken in a period of institutional change of particular significance to urban governance in the UK. As a result of the election of a 'New Labour' national government in 1997, the role of the state was being re-examined within, some would claim, pragmatic ideas and a rhetoric associated with the 'Third Way', communitarianism and devolution. These found articulation within highly contestable notions of a new 'regionalism' and 'urbanism' (Lovering, Webster). However, without extending the policy 'Set' to include wider or comparative studies, it is difficult to reflect on more general diversity and transnational conditions.

South Yorkshire and spatial justice

The South Yorkshire empirical work to date has thrown some light on three inter-related constructs that help to ground spatial justice within the types of policy narratives presented.

A continual tension in both studies was the extent to which different actors and stakeholders expected or requested additional data and analyses to support or verify the ideas and arguments that were advanced by the consultants' studies. However, both policy studies remained within a relatively fixed construction of spatial inequality (GDP *per capita*; unemployment; industrial structure; levels of investment etc). It is less clear if this was largely for pragmatic reasons, determined by contractual expectations within the consultancy arrangements, or an exertion of prevailing power relations that were used to exclude other interests, which might have brought alternative expressions of spatial justice, such as those that might promote environmental sustainability and low growth.

One critical influence of EU ideas was on the spatial scale at which inequality and the spatialisation of uneven development was given articulation. It is difficult to attribute a measurable impact that EU Structural Fund grant regimes had on the definition of economic inequality, other than the use of South Yorkshire as a territory within which to advance a particular measure of economic failure, in this case GDP *per capita*. There was then a failure to relate this territorial scale to a wider picture. Instead, the narratives have explored how this territory then applied spatial ideas to tease out contested relationships within the area, either between boroughs as in the use of frictionless mobility in the Bottlenecks Study; or between different urban areas within the boroughs, as with polycentric development in the coalfields.

More work needs to be undertaken within the IMAGES framework to explore and define these different responses. The complex, multi-level and stakeholder relationships revealed by the South Yorkshire narratives suggest that certain responses dominated over others, some

were excluded or refused legitimacy. A hierarchical set of policy relationships tended to reinforce and act as a confirmatory setting for local policy makers, though this was not the only or dominant factor that conditioned the advancement and acceptance of policy ideas. Contestation arose where different models clashed, or failed to offer solutions and a means of implementing desired local outcomes, for example between market and welfare models of transport provision. Four such 'models' may provide a basis for exploring such conflicts in future IMAGES policy sets: market based; indigenous growth; social welfare; spatial redistribution. These clearly reside within broader notions of rationality and sets of values and beliefs.

Further work on this territorial set will take place in the following manner:

- Focus on a critical spatial policy event, in this case the formulation and preparation of a new Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), a new policy instrument within the UK.
- In depth analysis of the selected policy process using the cutting edges. This will build on earlier work undertaken in the South Yorkshire sub-region (Dabinett and Richardson 2004, ESRC CASE research programme), and current research on regionalism (ODPM funded project monitoring the English regional assemblies).
- Analyse how different spatial areas are mediated and contested, such as those designated by the EU to receive structural funds, or ESDP influenced ideas about polycentric urban development. Analysis explores multilevel linkages relevant to the policy process, through the examination of different scales (such as the sub-regional investment plans of Yorkshire Forward, the inter-regional Northern Way, the national urban renaissance, and the EU NORVISION); and the understanding of different sectoral activities, such as regeneration and social exclusion programmes, transport investment, and innovation policies.

6. Conclusions

We have argued above that IMAGES facilitates a much-needed critical understanding of the emergence of a new EU spatial policy field. The focus on governance and the spatial justice dimension ensure that the results will be of interest in terms of critical policy analysis, as well as providing a valuable sounding board for future policy making.

We hope that the findings of possible IMAGES research can provide new insights into how the emerging field of European spatial policy is taking shape. Examining policy making from different perspectives will allow us to construct a comprehensive picture of the interrelations between different policy fields and levels of policy making, in addition to seeing these issues more fully in the context of their regional diversity.

As illustrated by the case of South Yorkshire, the multi-level perspective is crucial in illustrating where and how European policies are shaped by an interplay between public and private sector interests at different scales. This implies that European policy making is seen as a permanent ongoing dialogue and conflict. The idea of simply researching the effects of policy in a 'top-down' manner is considered outdated. The interplay between creating/shaping policies and their application, impacts and effects in a permanent ongoing process, is considered more relevant. Each study can certainly only represent a snapshot, taken at a certain moment, or in the best case a series of snapshots fixing several moments in this ongoing interplay. It is, however, anticipated that such an approach will reflect these dynamics as far as possible. This can be done in the context of a series of issues relating to the creation and effects of spatial policies in a multi-level system. These issues have formerly been introduced as cutting edges.

Needless to say, other themes could also be of interest here. We would however argue that the cutting edges presented here are not only of particular academic interest to critical research. Indeed, the six themes are each in their own right issues of major importance to the real life politics and planning of the European Union. Given this approach to analysing spatial policy making in the EU, core features of the construction of this policy field will be identified, especially concerning questions of influence and the balance of power between various actors, across levels of governance. Furthermore, it will become clearer how policy issues are created and how they subsequently have an impact on various level of spatial governance. This approach to an integrated multi-level analysis of the governance of European space (IMAGES) needs to draw on experiences and knowledge from different European countries and fields of research. Accordingly, this analysis will, step by step, allow a European network on the critical analysis of spatial policies finally to crystallise, as no such network currently exists in an organised form.

Taken together this work is intended to provide the initial contribution to a new form of European spatial policy research called for at the beginning of this paper. Though we started off by stating that there is a lack of critical value based literature in the field, the proposed IMAGES framework can lead to the emergence of a more critical discourse in the field. As outlined above, the point of departure for the IMAGES perspective is embedded in the idea of spatial justice, i.e. a deeper understanding of how spatial imbalances and inequalities are changed, and which societal groups and territories emerge as the winners or losers in respect of European spatial policies. Furthermore, it also raises questions about why and how certain spatial ideas have become hegemonic in Europe, about what different approaches to spatial development mean for different places and communities across Europe (and beyond fortress Europe). It is then hoped that such an endeavour will eventually enrich the current debate about a policy field currently seeking to express the European project in material form.

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