

## Territorial Cohesion for Managing Change in Cultural Landscapes

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### 1 ABSTRACT

Global challenges such as globalization or climate change have an increasing impact on cultural landscapes. Spatial planning at the regional level has to introduce new planning views and practices to deal with these developments. The European policy concept of territorial cohesion can be an inspirational force. Introduced in the Treaty of Lisbon as a shared competence, territorial cohesion is in fact viewed as a continuous process in which territories, such as cities and regions, can reach an optimal solution for long term development, utilizing their specific territorial capital. The paper develops a conceptual framework to translate territorial cohesion from the EU level to the regional level where it can support the sustainable management and planning of spatial transformations. An analysis of recent transformations in the Veneto region in Italy and in Flanders' Great War landscape, illustrates how territorial cohesion can play a role in two aspects: the specification of territorial objectives for policy making and the provision of frameworks for policy implementation. In particular, territorial cohesion is highlighting a soft place-based policy framework based on four policy principles: horizontal policy coordination, multi-level governance, evidence-informed policy making and cooperation based on functional polycentric areas.

### 2 INTRODUCTION

In his recent article in *DisP*, Andreas Faludi (2010) presents territorial cohesion policy as a form of soft spatial planning on a European level. Soft spatial planning, in contrast to the traditional hard spatial planning, focuses on space as a rather "soft" category which is to be negotiated wherever challenges cut across boundaries. Even with the extended legal framework of the treaty of Lisbon, spatial planners should not aim for the development of supranational hard spatial planning. It would probably turn into a costly mistake and will not be accepted by member-states anyway.

In this paper we will show the added value of the concept of territorial cohesion and soft spatial planning, both on transnational and regional level. First we will drill down the concept of territorial cohesion into four basic principles. In a second part we will address the challenges of planning for cultural landscapes. Finally possible applications of territorial cohesion on a regional level will be explored through the cases of Palladian Villas in the Veneto and the Flanders' Great War landscape.

### 3 TERRITORIAL COHESION CAN BE INTERPRETED AS COHESION POLICY BASED ON THE TERRITORY AND ITS (TERRITORIAL) CAPITAL.

A territory consist of a geographic entity, with a distinct topology, geology, hydrology,... and the creatures that inhabit it. The geographic entity and the inhabitants share a common history that is visible in the natural and cultural landscape. The slow dynamic of the physical environment forms the background on which the biotic interactions and interventions take place. In order to understand the territory, we should know more about places and their functional relations. As any other spatial planning policy territorial cohesion should be well informed, based on functional relations and start from a holistic approach.

Cohesion policy focuses on specific assets of (European) member states and tries to bring equal opportunities to the regions and the citizens, considering the assets of regional differences. By nature, European cohesion policy is about cooperation between member states, regional and local authorities, ngo's, and involves coordination methods to reach the common goals. Multi level governance and the use of 'soft' policy measures form the core of this approach.

Frequently, the concept of territorial cohesion is only used as an objective for policy making, and not the framework for policy implementation it could be. In our view, the concept uses both soft spatial planning methods such as cooperation, coordination, and partnerships and place based traditional hard spatial

planning. Most importantly, to pursue a stronger territorial dimension in EU policy, it consists of four basic principles<sup>1</sup>:

- horizontal policy coordination
- multi-level governance
- evidence-informed policy making
- cooperation based upon functional areas

Introducing these principles, a local/regional planning process is confronted with an array of questions which can raise the effectiveness of the planning outcome such as land use plans, spatial structure schemes, development plans,...

| Horizontal policy coordination   | Multi-level governance   | Evidence-informed policy making  | Cooperation based on functional areas   |
|--|--|--|---|
| Do we know what other policy fields need?<br>Are we aware of territorial claims of other policies?<br>Can we incorporate and discuss their needs during planning for a specific area?<br>... | What other authorities or stakeholders are involved?<br>Did we discuss their needs?<br>Are we looking in both directions? (scaling up and down)<br>Can everyone take his responsibility during planning and implementation?<br>... | Are we informed of the existing territorial capital, such as physical assets, knowledge, active policies, networks, personal capacities...?<br>Are we aware of opportunities and threats?<br>... | Do we understand how our territory functions?<br>Are we aware of the scale and scope of the functional relation?<br>Are we trying to change processes that are driven by factors outside our local action field?<br>... |

Table 1: questions related to territorial cohesion in regional and local planning

Most of the questions are not new, if you're used to a just and comprehensive planning approach. Nevertheless, territorial cohesion as a policy framework adds value by actually emphasizing and combining four 'soft' policy principles that reinforce one another. The novelty lies in the equal role all four principles play in all phases of a planning process. In order to realize sustainable territorial development, it strives for coherence of policies with territorial impact based on principles of partnership and subsidiarity. For both objectives and resources, it is gearing policies towards alignment between the different levels of government and policy areas.

At the base is the principle of working with functional areas - functional geographies – which is particularly useful when dealing with challenges whose territorial scope does not fit within administrative limits. Especially in urbanizing regions who want to encourage polycentric development, territorial cohesion, based on territorial assets and functional relations will help politicians and planners getting things right. Moreover, through the better horizontal and vertical coordination of policies and inclusion and transfers of territorial knowledge, the more suitable administrative and political entities are enabled to effectively implement policies on relevant areas. It thus supports targeting the most effective geographic level to make the most of territorial capital.

#### 4 SPATIAL PLANNING FOR CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

Cultural Landscapes have been defined by the World Heritage Committee as distinct geographical areas or properties uniquely "...represent[ing] the combined work of nature and of man.." (UNESCO 2005). This concept has been adapted and developed as part of an international effort to reconcile "...one of the most pervasive dualisms in Western thought - that of nature and culture" (Pannell 2006).

Environments, or landscapes, are essentially evolving, changing, with new layers continually being superimposed on older ones. It is true for natural change, even more so for change caused by human impact. Human beings have shaped and changed the landscape they live in. As a result of cultivation processes,

<sup>1</sup> See also: Belgian Presidency, Two notes on key-issues, Note 1. Place-based policy framework, agreed upon during the meeting of the Directors-General responsible for the Territorial Agenda in Namur, November 29-30 2010, in preparation of the Territorial Agenda 2020, which will be adopted during the Informal Ministerial Meeting to be held in Gödöllo on May 19, 2011.



natural landscapes have become farming landscapes. When the agrarian society slowly transformed into an urban one, the landscape transformed at the same time. From the industrial revolution on, the complexity of conflicting individual and societal interests made cooperation and concertation necessary and gave birth to early forms of spatial and regional planning.

'The landscape is a product of several generations of building, planting and modelling to provide a space in which to live.[...] Over time, the various marks on the landscape accumulate, and each time a new 'reading' is required to unearth its secrets.' (Meeus 2008).

It is thus possible to analyze the landscape as a build-up of various systems or types of cultivation, one laid out over the other, with layers interacting over time through processes of accumulation and superimposition (Corboz, Marot 2001; Steenbergen, Reh 1996). The cultural landscape cannot stay the same, as culture means action, experience, experiment, progress, change (Burckhardt, 1994). How this addition and interaction take place, is a role of spatial planning and it has an impact on the territorial capital as a resource for regional development.



Figure1: The landscape as a layered system

There are few European nations and regions with a strong spatial planning tradition aimed at handling cultural landscapes. Mediterranean planning tradition is oriented towards urban contexts. The French approach starts from local decisions and cooperation between (small) municipalities. Belgian planning mainly focuses on infrastructure and economic development, etc. The way heritage sites are governed illustrates a lack of knowledge on how to live and work in a cultural landscape without destroying its majors assets.

#### 4.1 Palladian Villas in the Veneto

“The Veneto has mountains, alpine lakes, romantic hills and rivers, the lagoon and the sea. It has more medieval city walls than any other region in Europe. Most importantly, it has thousands of 15th- to 18th-century villas that are the very symbol of the Veneto. The patricians of Venice bought land, invested in huge estates and commissioned famous architects to build magnificent residences.”

The Veneto in north-eastern Italy is most famous for its 16th century villas, of which those built by Andrea Palladio (1508–80) are probably the most valued. Because of Palladio’s decisive influence on the development of architecture, the City of Vicenza and a selection of the Palladian Villas scattered throughout the Veneto region, were inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1994. This conservation approach, however, is being challenged by recent changes, characteristic of a region looking for economic recovery. Land speculation, the construction boom, empty factories and warehouses, the new A31 motorway that is under construction, they all have their fragmentary impact on the Palladian landscape and the architectural unity it is famous for.

While villas commonly (re)presented a refuge for town people, seeking relaxation in a natural setting, Palladio drew perfectly organised agricultural villas, which were to function simultaneously as ideal dwellings. They were used as working farms in the fertile Po Plains and were strategically sited at the junctions of roads and waterways. The villa was conceived as an ideal, proportional system based upon square grids in order to achieve correct proportions for plans and elevations. This rational scheme of dimensions and proportions also organised the relationship between villa and landscape, whereby the functional (Roman) division of the farmlands established the villa and the landscape in one architectural order. (Clemens, Reh, 1996)

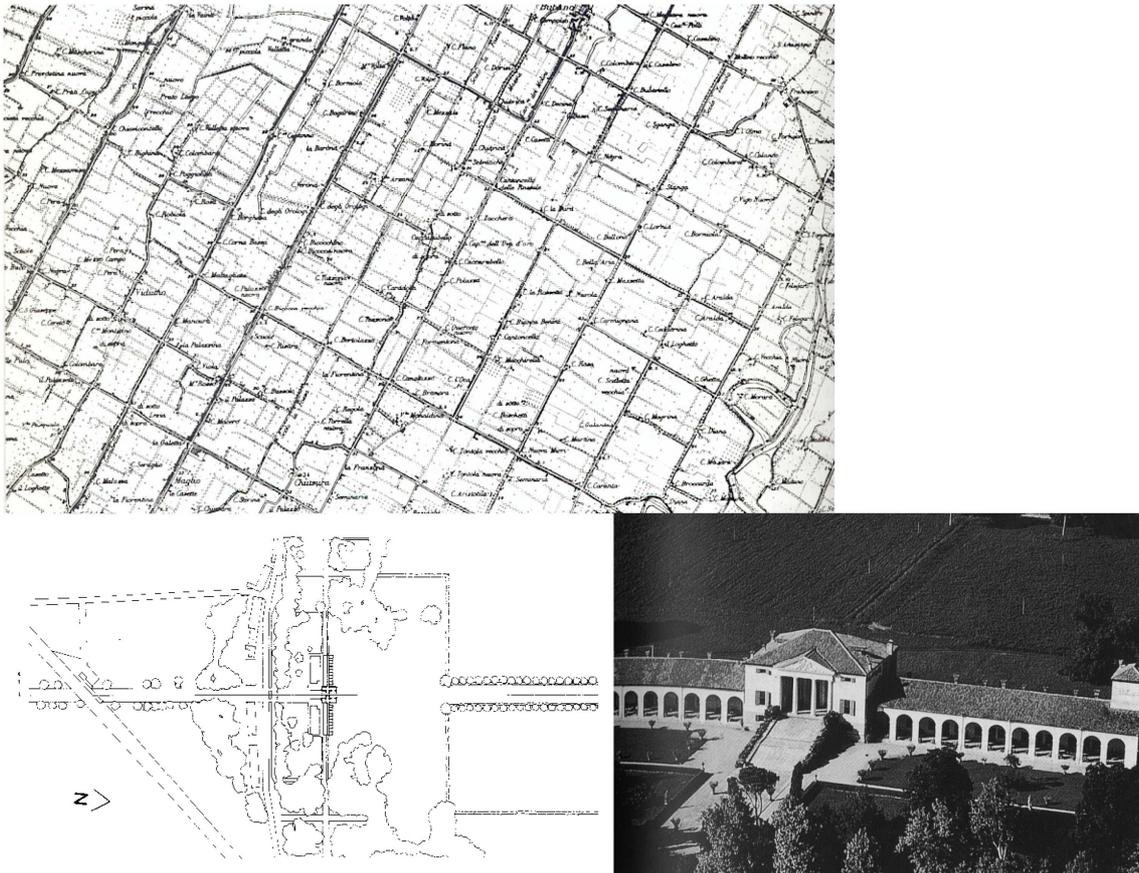


Figure2: The Palladian landscape: Po valley grid & Villa Emo

The 'villa-farmhouses' and their surroundings narrate a story that goes beyond the ideas or the architectural style of Palladio. In fact, they convey an era during which the relationship between the city of Venice and the Veneto region significantly changed. Due to a series of military defeats and the collapse of international trade towards the end of the 15th century, the city of Venice had to rely on its own hinterland for its economic development. As a result, the entire region underwent a vast reclamation project for agricultural purposes. Noble families that were at the centre of this project did tend to place importance on characteristics that defined their aristocratic status at an ideological and cultural level, and, above all, wished to draw attention to their ownership and control of the land (Beltramini 2007). As a consequence, the structure of villas and landscape - the classical architectonic elements, the square grid, long avenues and panoramic views - are both reflecting the old social hierarchy and the reality of agricultural activities.

The process of change never stopped. Transformations due to urbanization and globalization have been adding to the Palladian landscape and as a result, it is losing readability, reaching its capacity to absorb ad hoc additions. By now, the Veneto is evolving towards a landscape in which the preservation of an architectural element is like leaving a word in a landscape of many words but little sentences.



Figure3: Fragments of UNESCO's World Heritage protection of the Palladian villas

While the Veneto region's more recent planning memos do recognise the importance of the land itself, stating that a villa cannot be separated from the context of its surroundings, a more holistic approach is required to retain the regional identity and cultural heritage value of this cultural landscape. In fact, the problem is not that new developments are taking place.

The territorial cohesion discourse is not merely about emphasizing the importance of regional uniqueness; it also offers a dynamic approach towards territorial capital. "Territory and regional diversity matters, without however stating that Europe is a myriad of small places to be preserved. It is not. It is however many overlapping soft spaces, large and small. The challenge for planners is to help comprehend this reality and not to simplify it." (Faludi 2010) Landscapes and the territorial capital they stand for are considered resources to be used and developed in a sustainable way, not only to be preserved. By combining horizontal policy coordination, multi-level governance, evidence-informed policy making and cooperation based upon functional areas, regional planning can relate to this landscape as to a series of overlapping spaces, each delineated according to the spatial reach of one particular issue, each of interest to a particular stakeholder in the landscape. The question is not whether these transformations should occur, or whether these soft spaces should coexist, but how. How can a highway intervention add meaning to the Palladian landscape? Increasing, or at least conserving the cultural heritage value of landscapes like the Veneto means managing change. At this stage, the emphasis is on policy implementation and creativity in the design or planning process.

#### 4.2 The great war landscape in Western Flanders (Westhoek)

Planning a cultural landscape is still inexistant in Flanders. First experiments with a national park (Nationaal park hoge kempen) and attempts to implement the concept of ecoservices in new flood areas can be seen as a first step. In 2014, however, the big challenge of the centennial memorial of the first world war will prove to be a huge challenge. In the 1920s the rapid reconstruction in Belgium, the need for forgetting the tragic period of the first world war and quick redevelopment of the agricultural land erased large parts of the frontline landscape. Economic growth and prosperity of the last 50 years have erased most of the remains of the 1918 landscape and the image of a important european historic scene is lost.



Figure 4: the Artois flatlands seen from the Canadian memorial at Vimy... Liévin, Lens, les terrils de Loos. (Zaman, Jan, 12/03/2011)

Other parts of the Great War setting, eg in Vimy have been preserved and kept their cultural potential intact. When you visit Vimy, you can feel the geographic importance of the site, the remains of the impact craters on the other hand, still remember the fact that nothing was ever the same after the war.

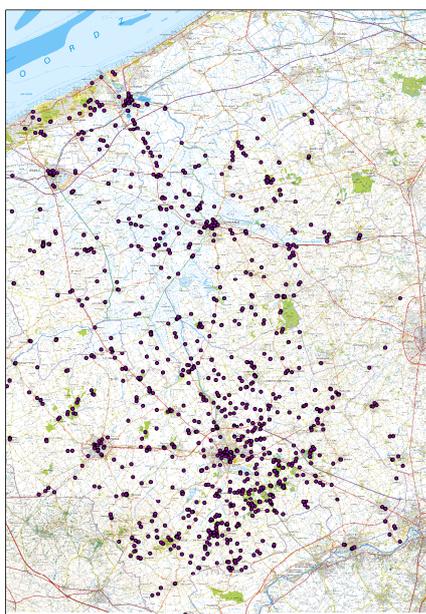


Figure 5: VIOE inventory of Great War heritage in Western Flanders, own map



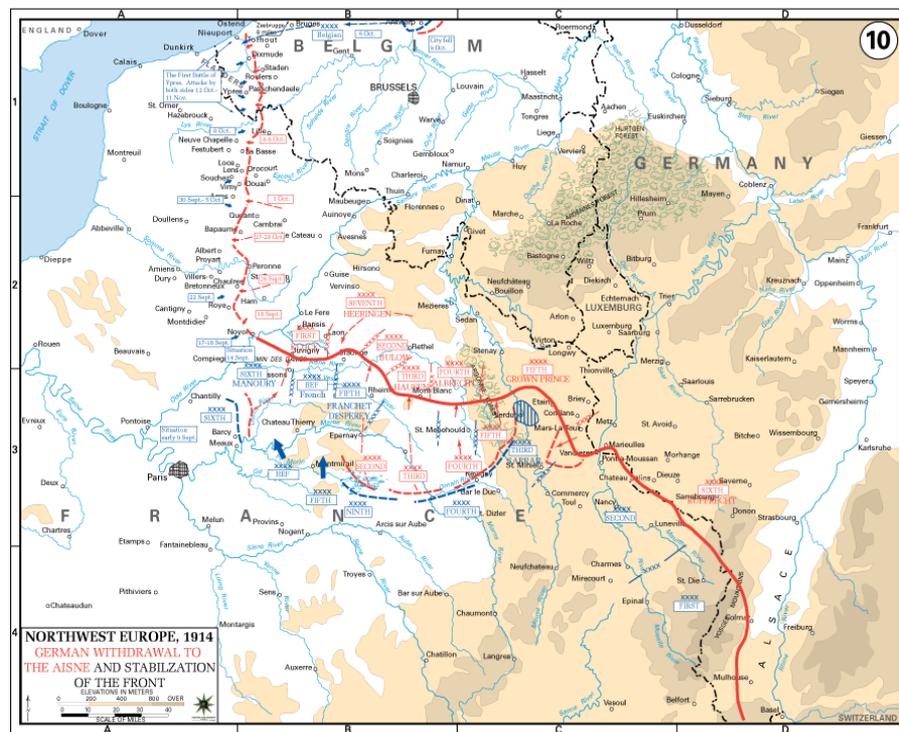


Figure 6: The History Department of the United States Military Academy. As found on 23/2/2011 on: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Stabilization\\_of\\_Western\\_Front\\_WWI.PNG](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Stabilization_of_Western_Front_WWI.PNG)

Recently, the Flemish institute for immovable heritage (VIOE) started the inventory of Great War remains in 'the westhoek', the Belgian part of the 14-18 frontline. The inventory covers around 1400 sites, which are all well documented. A map of all sites inventorised shows the vast cultural potential of the remains. When you have a closer look, eg at the Boezinge Yorkshire Trench, you can witness the difficulty contemporary Flemish society has with these heritage sites.



Figure 7: Boezinge: Yorkshire Trench & Dugout: view of the site (Decoodt, Hannelore, 06-01-2005, ©Vlaamse Gemeenschap)

This postmodern landscape is exempt of meaning, it becomes a void. It is a good example of a clear conflict between a new industrial estate and a heritage site of European importance. Both functions lose their meaning in the way they are confronted. The Yorkshire Trench is conceived as a 'unused plot', thus leaving the industrial estate incomplete, while ignoring the historic and cultural importance and coherence of the site.

It is clear that in places like Boezinge, some hard spatial planning and action is needed on a local level to rehabilitate the site from both points of view. Creating a good design and approach for the heritage plot on the industrial estate is difficult but still feasible. Local horizontal policy coordination between different

actors and stakeholders is needed to succeed. Managers of the heritage site, the industrial estate and the municipal provincial authorities have to work together to create a decent, meaningful project.

However, this type of action has to be incorporated in a larger framework, in order to create a large cultural landscape from Switzerland to the North Sea. Comparing the Flemish Great War landscape and heritage sites with other parts of the European front can attribute to a broader understanding of possible approaches, concepts and vision. Such exchange of good practices can lead to cooperation and joint actions in various fields, eg management of heritage sites, careful urbanisation, good local development and awareness and sensitivity to creating and maintaining of a coherent contemporary cultural landscape.

The existing heritage evidence base has to be completed with the functional characteristics of the rather rural 'Westhoek' area. Agriculture, tourism, small towns, villages and local industries form the socio-economic base of this territory. To create an actual cultural landscape, cooperation between all local stakeholders, across municipal borders is necessary. A good understanding of the functional specificity of this 21st century area will feed into attempts of horizontal policy coordination and evidence of multi-level governance.

A territorial cohesion approach for the Great War landscape strengthens a strategic programming approach based on adequate knowledge of local potentials, but also taking into account the interdependence of, and taking advantage of complementarities between areas. It broadens the scope of territorial capital beyond endogenous potential, looking at over-the-border interdependencies and regional competitiveness. It goes beyond social and economic capital, and includes space as a resource for development. In this way, each place should be able to exploit and preserve its own territorial capital by finding specific links with local as well as global resources - making the most of each place.

## **5 CONCLUSION: THE ADDED VALUE OF TERRITORIAL COHESION TO SPATIAL PLANNING POLICY ON A REGIONAL OR LOCAL LEVEL**

Territorial cohesion offers a soft version of a place-based policy. As a framework for policy implementation, it is different from hard spatial planning by its broader interpretation of the territorial capital, valorising soft resources and combining soft instruments. By bringing functional relationships to the heart of spatial planning, territorial cohesion is presenting a more flexible integrated approach to territorial policy. It is conceiving the territory as an overlapping of soft spaces for which it develops new and multiple ways of governance - albeit using existing instruments and structures. It does so in order to deal with contemporary issues of permeability of borders, territorial complexity and simultaneity. As Faludi (2010) describes, these ways of governance rely on a joint formulation of strategy while keeping dispersed and thus flexible powers of action. "The only investment needed is the will to cooperate and to continue to cooperate in settings that evolve over time."

The conception of territorial cohesion as the overlapping of soft spaces underpins the notion of space as a historic construct. It is qualifying cultural landscapes as a resource for sustainable development. The cases of the Veneto and Westhoek regions teach us that the interpretation of cultural landscapes needs to be broadened. Cultural landscapes are an extremely valuable and not easily renewable resource. They are dynamic evolving systems that continuously are being changed. By transforming the landscape however, often opportunities of adding value are being lost by lack of awareness and inappropriate interventions. 'Spoiling' the cultural landscape by neglecting the opportunities has consequences that go far beyond the local (negative) impacts.

The existence of overlapping soft spaces and cultural landscapes in need of negotiation and mediation between different layers (old and new, layers of different policy interests) is the rationale for soft spatial planning. A major challenge involves exactly the articulation of the interaction between the different layers. How to add to the existing in a sustainable way? Cultural landscapes substantiate the idea that sustainability is a process rather than a state.

Sustainable development involves sustaining what has been realised as Brundtland defines, but also sustaining future development. It means the preservation of opportunities but also the creation of new resources and opportunities for future generations (Loeckx, Shannon, 2004). In order to realize sustainable territorial development, the emphasis shifts from maintenance to creation. Territorial strategies should not only protect cultural and natural heritage, but also create territorial dynamics which strengthen and requalify



the (weakened) territorial assets such as identity and nature. Sustainability – and thus the challenge for spatial planning - is positioned in the character of change itself, and not in terms of any optimal state, pattern or blueprint.

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