

**E-learning Postgraduate Course**  
**ESPON Evidence in a North European Context**  
**ENECON**

**Thematic Lecture #3**  
**JOENSUU**

**“Learning from Europe? The evolution of territorial  
governance in Finland”**



EUROPEAN UNION

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# Introduction

- European Union – 20 years of a “spatial planning agenda” including
  - Europe 2000/Europe 2000+
  - ESDP process
  - Territorial Agenda
  - ESPON
- Finland represents an interesting example of processes of Europeanization in spatial planning and territorial governance
  - From relative isolation and Nordic co-operation to proactive engagement in European integration, including territorial governance
- How have the European-level debate and Finnish practices/discourses influenced each other?



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# The Concept of 'Europeanisation'

- Europeanization (Olsen 2002)
  - ...as the development of institutions of governance at the European level
  - ...as central penetration of national and sub-national systems of governance
- Top-down influences (downloading) & Bottom-up influences (uploading) (Wishlade et al. 2003)
  - misfit between EU and domestic processes
  - adaptational pressure
  - hegemonic discourses (Böhme 2002)
- Horizontal and circular processes (cross-loading) (Lenschow 2006)
  - Collective deliberation
  - 'sharing and learning'



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# Topical Issues in Finnish Territorial Governance since the 1990s

- Finland 're-positioned' itself as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union and EU membership in 1995
  - Examples of initiatives: Northern Dimension, Baltic Sea Co-operation
- Re-orientation in Finnish regional development policy during the 90s against the background of a strong recession
  - towards a neo-liberal agenda?
  - from cohesion between the regions to urban centres as engines for growth (Antikainen & Vartiainen 2005)
  - from welfare provision in the entire country to innovation-driven development in urban centres and regional clusters



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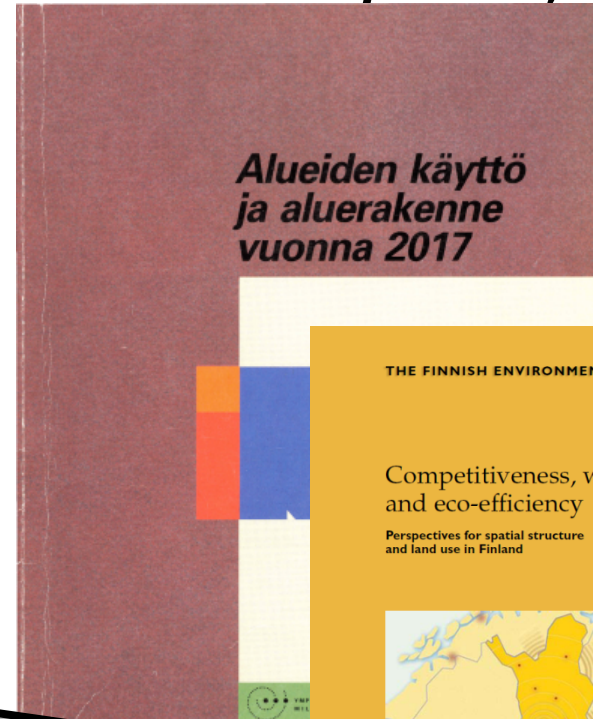
# European Influences in Finnish territorial governance: *Adapting Institutions to EU requirements*

- Initial misfit with EU requirements related to the Structural Funds; which resulted in the...
- ...partial strengthening of the regional level of governance, Finnish variant of "European regionalisation" → setting up the Regional Councils
- With the establishment of the Regional Councils regional development policy and spatial planning were integrated at the regional level: the European spatial planning 'ideal'
- At the national level, separation between the two spheres remains: Ministry of the Environment responsible for spatial planning; regional policy at the Ministry of Employment and the Economy



# European Influences in Finnish territorial governance: *A Europeanised Finnish policy debate?*

- Acknowledgement, adaptation and adoption of European concepts and notions in the Finnish planning vocabulary despite spatial realities that often do not lend themselves to “European concepts”
  - “[t]his vision is based on interactive preparation and on the study of national and international plans and research documents” (downloading!)
  - “[t]he aim is also to make an impact at the international level by presenting Finland’s views and needs of co-operation” (uploading!)



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# European Influences in Finnish territorial governance: *A territorial epistemic community?*

- Epistemic community defined as a: "network of professionals with organized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain" (Haas 1992: 3)
- Finland exhibits a rather decentralized and - arguably – non-specialised epistemic community in spatial planning
- No dedicated research institute on spatial development and planning, such as DATAR (France) or BBR (Germany)
- Pooling resources and providing a Nordic voice at the European level: Nordregio → 'joint Nordic uploading' and Nordic engagement with **ESPO**



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# European Influences in Finnish territorial governance: *Playing the policy game with European rules*

- Alerting EU institutions to the geographical and spatial specificities in the country; see for example the activities of the NSPA (Northern Sparsely Populated areas) → see: <http://www.nspa-network.eu/>
- Alerting EU institutions to the importance of the external border with Russia via, for example, the Northern Dimension initiative or the setting up of the first Euregio on the external border of the EU (Euregio Karelia/ENPI Karelia) → see case study on the Finnish-Russian border in the scientific report of the ESPON TERCO project [http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu\\_Projects/Menu\\_AppliedResearch/terco.html](http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu_Projects/Menu_AppliedResearch/terco.html)





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# Conclusions

- Finland represents complex processes of Europeanisation at the level of an individual country; not an automatic indication of a significant process of convergence of spatial planning or territorial governance processes; for studies on such processes see ESPON 'Governance' project
- Adaptation to institutional requirements with indirect effects on spatial planning and territorial governance (see Regional Council example described earlier)
- Active Finnish engagement with the European policy debate resulting in selective adoption and adaptation of policy concepts

