Report from the Nordic-Baltic ESPON Conference for Planners and Policy-makers

"Transnational perspectives on spatial planning – Experiences from the Nordic-Baltic countries"

Two days – two themes

ESPON and its relevance for the Baltic Sea Region

International aspects in regional planning and policy

Venue: Nordregio, Holmamiralens väg 10, Skeppsholmen, Stockholm, 3-4 February 2011

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The conference comprises of two elements:

- Discussions on the findings of transnational ESPON projects that bear particular relevance for Nordic-Baltic countries
- Discussions on the changing nature and role of planning in the Nordic-Baltic countries

In addition, information will be provided in co-operation with the ESPON Co-ordination Unit on how to access and utilise the information and evidence produced by the ESPON 2013 Programme.

The key themes to be discussed:

- ❑ Nordic-Baltic countries in light of ESPON findings
- ❑ ESPON in evidence-based spatial and territorial policy in the Nordic-Baltic countries at macro-regional, national and regional levels
- ❑ Europeanization processes in spatial planning in the Nordic-Baltic countries: similarities and dissimilarities
- ❑ Messages of the ESPON scenarios concerning Nordic-Baltic countries – from the metropolitan centres to the Northern Sparsely Populated Areas (NSPA)

Organizers:
The NORBA-consortium in cooperation with Nordregio

Brief Dictionary
Nordic-Baltic dialogues on transnational perspectives in spatial planning (NORBA) = A networking project within the ESPON 2013 Programme, implemented by the ECPs from Finland (Lead Partner), Estonia, Iceland, Latvia, Norway and Sweden

ECP = ESPON Contact Point

ESPON 2013 = The European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion

Nordregio = Nordic Centre for Spatial Development

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Swedish website, http://www.infra.kth.se/svenskecp

NORBA website, http://rha.is/norba

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Programme –
all presentations in detail and photos can be seen at the NORBA-website
http://rha.is/norba

Day 1, Thursday 3 February: ESPON findings and their relevance for the BSR

Chair: Heikki Eskelinen (University of Eastern Finland/NORBA)

Questions and discussions after every speech

11.30-12.30: Sandwich lunch

12.30-12.45: **Words of Welcome**
Heikki Eskelinen (University of Eastern Finland/NORBA)
Mats Johansson (KTH/NORBA)
Ole Damsgaard (Nordregio)

12.45-13.20: **ESPON 2013 on the road**
Peter Billing (ESPON CU)

13.20-14.00: **The 5th Cohesion Report**
Jean Peyrony (DG Regio)

14.00-14.40: **Spatial scenarios for Europe and Nordic-Baltic Countries**
Alexandre Dubois (Nordregio)

14.40-15.00: Coffee break

15.00-15.40: **Lessons from the Territorial Diversity-project (TeDi)**
Grétar Thór Eythórsson (University of Akureyri/NORBA)

15.40-16.20: **Future migratory movements – concentration or de-concentration?**
Johanna Roto (Nordregio, ESPON DEMIFER)

16.20-16.30: Stretching the legs

16.30-17.10: **A new rural typology for Europe and intermediate regions**
Andrew Copus (UHI, UK/Nordregio, Sweden, ESPON EDORA)

17.10-18.10: **"What can ESPON do for your region?"**
Panel discussion based on the earlier presentations
Chair: Lisa Van Well (Nordregio)
Participants:
Peter Billing (ESPON CU)
Jean Peyrony (DG Regio)
Andrew Copus (UHI, Nordregio)
Ole Damsgaard (Nordregio)
Odd Godal (Norwegian MC-member)
Sverker Lindblad (Swedish MC-member)

18.10 **End of Day 1**

Day2, Friday 4 February: International aspects in national and regional planning

Chair: Folke Snickars (KTH, Sweden)

Questions and discussions after every speech

08.30-09.20: **Outlooks towards Europe in national planning of the Northern and Baltic countries - an overview**
Niels Boje Groth (KVL, Denmark)

09.20-09.55: **The need for interplay between international and national planning perspectives – reflections from a local perspective**
Carl-Johan Engström (KTH, Division of Urban and Regional Studies, Stockholm, Sweden)

09.55-10.30: **Finnish planning meets Europe**
Timo Turunen (Ministry of the Environment, Finland)

10.30-10.50: Coffee break

10.50-11.50: The development of regional planning in the Baltic States

10.50-11.10: **Development of the Regional planning concept for the next programming period**
Inguna Urtane (Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, Latvia)

11.10-11.30: **Linking the Estonian national spatial plan Estonia 2030+ with the European and Baltic spatial strategies**
Tavo Kikas (Estonian Ministry of Internal Affairs, Estonia)

11.30-11.50: **The development of regional planning in the Lithuania**
Marija Burinskiene (Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, Lithuania)

11.50-12.00: Stretching the legs

12.00-13.10: **The need for international aspects in regional planning and policies**
Closing panel discussion
Chair: Folke Snickars (KTH, Sweden)
Participants:
Heikki Eskelinen (University of Eastern Finland/NORBA)
Niels Boje Groth (KVL, Denmark)
Tavo Kikas (Estonian Ministry of Internal Affairs, Estonia)
Inguna Urtane (Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, Latvia)
Christer Bengs (SLU, Sweden)

13.10: **Closing the conference**

13.15: Sandwich lunch

Short and selected presentations at the NORBA conference (for detailed presentations, see NORBA website, http://rha.is/norba)

First day, 3 February


The chair of NORBA **Heikki Eskelinen** opened the conference with more than 60 participants during two days.

Words of Welcome
Heikki Eskelinen (University of Eastern Finland/NORBA, Finnish ECP)
Mats Johansson (KTH/NORBA, Swedish ECP)
Ole Damsgaard (Director of Nordregio)

The Finnish ECP, **Heikki Eskelinen,** who also is the chair of the NORBA-constellation, opens the conference by stating the purpose of the conference and of NORBA. The conference is part of the NORBA project "Nordic - Baltic Dialogues on Transnational Perspectives in Spatial Planning", which is an ESPON priority 4 activity. The aim of the conference is to disseminate ESPON results by involving policy makers, practitioners and scientists. Partners of NORBA are the ECPs in Finland, Estonia, Iceland, Latvia, Norway and Sweden.

The Swedish ECP, **Mats Johansson,** continued by underlining that the aim of the conference is to disseminate ESPON results by involving policy makers, practitioners and scientists. Dissemination of different ESPON-results dominates the first conference day. The second day of the conference focuses on the kind of international aspects that planners are taking on board at a regional and local level and the challenge to compare scientific and practical experiences and work procedures from different countries in the Baltic Sea Region.

The director of Nordregio, **Ole Damsgaard,** who hosted the conference, continued by welcoming the audience to Nordregio. He presented the work that they perform and some general findings from the applied research that mainly is conducted on the Nordic countries. In addition, he underlined that they also analyze the Baltic Sea Region and are actively involved in several ESPON-projects in the ongoing 2013 programme - as they were in its forerunner. As a Nordic organization Nordregio is operating in the border zone between research and policy and it is part of the European research family, with a focus on policy implications and policy inputs. In the end of his speech, Damsgaard stressed the importance of identifying different structures, potentialities and processes in

territorial development, such as decision-making and governance procedures. Nordregio's central research themes are territorial development (policy and planning), territorial knowledge dynamics and environment and society.

ESPON 2013 on the road – progress and future activities
Peter Billing (ESPON CU)

Peter Billing from the ESPON Coordination Unit gave a general background to the work in the ESPON programme and underlined the aim of this kind of research for policy makers and for participants in the programme. In brief, the aim of ESPON is to support policy development and to contribute to an enhanced competitiveness of European regions and cities. Furthermore, ESPON also provides evidence and policy suggestions on how to rationalize the spending of EU funds.

Billing also spoke about how ESPON is organized and the importance of the European contact points (ECPs) in disseminating and contributing to the utilization of ESPON results in participating countries. In total ESPON will provide more than 60 reports on territorial development over the period 2007-2013.

The purpose of the Nordic-Baltic approach is also to open a debate on how the Nordic-Baltic Area can position itself with regard to the rest of Europe and in a broader global context. As such, it is important to develop evidence to support the development of regional strategies that focus on the role of different regions in the Baltic Sea Region.

Billing took up the role of the ESPON in Structural Funds 2007-2013, including
•Support to policy development with evidence on European territorial structures, trends, perspectives and policy impacts,
• Revealing territorial potentials, based on comparable information on regions and cities

The budget for the ongoing ESPON programme 2007-13 is 47 million euro where ERDF covers 34 million euros and 13 millions come from the participating 31 countries.

The ESPON 2013 programme is divided in four priorities:

•P 1: Applied Research
•P 2: Targeted Analyses
•P 3: Scientific Platform with Tools
•P 4: Capitalisation


Peter Billing from ESPON CU and Heikki Eskelinen (on the left) concluded Billing's presentation with a discussion with the audience. Jean Peyrony, DG Regio, presented the 5th Cohesion Report (on the right).

Investing in Europe's future – The 5th Cohesion Report

Jean Peyrony (European Commission, DG Regio)

Jean Peyrony from DG Regio at the European Commission introduced the 5th Cohesion Report focusing on economic, social and territorial cohesion, and analyzed how the EU, national and regional governments have contributed to this process. The 5th Cohesion Report covers a range of development themes that can be summarized in terms of the following six points:

1. Situation and trends in EU regions, including competitiveness and convergence, well-being and social inclusion, and environmental sustainability including climate change adaptation.
2. Impact of national policies
3. Impact of other EU policies
4. Impact of Cohesion Policy
5. Conclusions: Options for the future
6. Implementing territorial cohesion

The main issues are analyses of regional disparities, the contribution of the EU, national and regional governments to territorial cohesion and the impact of Cohesion Policy after 2013. Peyrony emphasized also that the European Commission has observed that disparities between the EU regions are narrowing and that differences in prosperity have diminished substantially. Furthermore, many regions have succeeded in developing their competitiveness through innovation, competence, improved labour markets and infrastructure investments. The well- being within the European Union is strongly linked to increased incomes and new opportunities in the less developed parts of the EU, but not in the more developed regions. The Cohesion report also points out that there are regions that are at a high risk due to climate change and problems with insufficient water infrastructures, whereas some other regions have strong potentials for producing renewable energy. Peyrony made the point that better coordination between regions is needed and that national and regional development policies are important contributors in shaping the future of European regions. Nevertheless, it was highlighted that there must be a balanced approach to investment policies implying that we make right types of investment by considering the strong diversity among EU regions.

The session ended in a presentation of the cohesion policy with regard to the Europe 2020 Strategy, and the contribution of the cohesion policy to achieve the EU2020 goals. The options for a future cohesion policy can be summarized in the following four issues:

1. Enhancing European added value
2. Strengthening governance
3. Streamlining delivery
4. Architecture of cohesion policy

Spatial scenarios for Europe and the Nordic/Baltic countries

Alexandre Dubois (Nordregio)

The Nordregio researcher **Alexandre Dubois** presented an ESPON project on spatial scenarios for Europe including the Nordic-Baltic countries. The project has been directed towards future preconditions, and aimed at investigating where policies are necessary and how they should be shaped.

The presentation started up with the question "why do we need scenarios?" The answer to this question can, according to Dubios, be summed up in the following way:

•Territorial patterns are very durable, including inertia in the movement of people and enterprises as well as in the design and construction of infrastructures
• Policy decided today will show its effects in 10 or even 25 years
• Policy-makers need tools to evaluate future trends and probable effects of their decisions
• Scenarios = tools for future-oriented policy-making

Dubois also claimed that development has its own momentum but policy can shape this development. As such the future can create different conditions for the citizens in different parts of Europe, for economic development and competitiveness and for cohesion within the European territory, its regions and cities. The ESPON project has provided different spatial scenarios for the European territory as it explores alternative directions of possible trends and driving forces related to the future territorial development of the EU. It contributes to knowledge about territorial structures, trends, perspectives and policy impacts in an enlarging European Union.

The global challenges, according to Dubois, for Europe were summarized in the following four headings:

•Climate change, including long term effects, but locally inevitably probabilistic for quite a long period. Under this point, the risk of increasing socio-economic disparities at global scale was also highlighted.
• Energy, price and availability and uncertainty: dependency and security

• Ageing, long-term trends with high inertia and regionally intense due to migration

• Globalization, with liberalization and competition, concentration and metropolization, and internationalization of economic governance

Dubois presented also a trend scenario for the Baltic Sea Region consisting of:

•marked spatial differentiation at almost all levels: north-south, eastwest, urban-rural
• metropolitan areas as the main engines for development
• continued outward migration from the Baltic States and Poland
• northern periphery undergoes slow but steady population decline, except for dynamic urban environments
• increasing reliance on car transport
• renewable energies still in their infancy

The presentation ended with a long term scenario for the VASAB area; among other things the territorial cohesion perspective up to 2030 and key priorities for policy intervention were discussed.


Alexandre Dubois (on the left) discussed the spatial scenarios for Europe and the Nordic/Baltic countries and Grétar Thór Eythórsson (on the right) the TeDi project (ESPON 2013, Priority 2) project with North Iceland as one target region.

Territorial Diversity-project (TeDi) and the case of North Iceland
Grétar Thór Eythórsson (University of Akureyri/NORBA)

The Icelandic ECP **Grétar Thór Eythórsson** from University of Akureyri presented some results from two projects related to Iceland. The aim of these analyses were to investigate territorial diversity across Iceland, Norway, Cyprus, Malta, Romania and some other countries. The presentation included detailed descriptions of the living conditions and challenges in a planning context. Several of them, according to Eythórsson, are structural challenges implying greater importance to agglomeration economies and increased diversity between different areas in Iceland. Few jobs available for especially women are a big problem in northern Iceland.

The research topics include key strategic objectives of the EU such as:
- dynamic, knowledge-based economy,
- sustainable development,
- better jobs,
- social cohesion.

Among the geographic specificities considered can be mentioned:
- Mountain regions
- Islands

- Sparsely populated areas
- Highly populated areas in a peripheral position

From the quantitative analyzes some conclusions can be drawn. The primary conclusion is that "diversity of diversity" makes it impossible to treat the target regions as one homogenous group. This is a consequence of differences in:

- combinations of geographic specificities,
- economic heritage,
- national redistribution systems and wealth
- stages of development

To understand territorial diversity and to design policies that are adapted to the particular preconditions of individual regions one needs to consider their development processes rather than looking for distinctive performance levels or statistical features.

With regard to long-term improvement of quality of life recurring issues in these TeDi areas are:
– Income (low)
– Gender balance (or imbalance)
– Focus on youth as a basis for economic development
– Branding, self-perception
– Symbolic role of knowledge-intensive activities
– Diversity of lifestyles as a European value (modern value?)

It was highlighted that the main challenges in the TeDi areas are related to small population and isolated settlement patterns. A more in-depth understanding of the importance of promoting alternative lifestyles as an instrument of territorial cohesion is of utmost importance.

Future migratory movements – concentration or de-concentration?

Johanna Roto (Nordregio, ESPON DEMIFER)

Johanna Roto from Nordregio presented the ESPON DEMIFER project – "Demographic and migratory flows affecting European regions and cities". The title of her speech was "Future migratory movements – concentration or deconcentration". This project has – among other things – investigated ageing and accessibility as a challenge for regions. The most obvious problems concerning the European population development are caused by the fact that one fourth of the NUTS2 regions experiences population decline. The main demographic changes within the European space are slowing population growth, ageing, and intra- and extra-European migration. Especially working age population declined in many regions in Sweden and Denmark.

Some future prospects were discussed. Roto concluded that different policies can have significant effects on how regions develop in regard to ageing and accessibility. Given this, it is important to direct policies efficiently. Furthermore, Roto claimed that immigration may be an answer to certain challenges, but must then be integrated with other policies. As such, policy integration is important in territorial planning as well as understanding the relation between common challenges and opportunities. The rural regions are the regions with the largest future challenges in terms of population development and structure.

Four different scenarios between 2005 and 2050 were presented with regard to changes in total population and labour force. Different development paths with regard to economic development within the ESPON space form the point of departure for these scenarios.

The primary conclusion that Roto highlighted was that demography cannot be considered in isolation and separated from other policies such as housing, labour markets, integration of migrants, education, innovations and environmental quality.

Johanna Roto from Nordregio presented the DEMIFER-project (on the left) and Andrew Copus from UHI and Nordregio the EDORA project.

A new rural typology for European Rural and Intermediate regions
Andrew K Copus (UHI, UK/Nordregio, Sweden, ESPON EDORA)

Andrew Copus , who represented both University of Highlands and Islands in Scotland and Nordregio, presented experiences and some of the main findings from the EDORA project ("European Development Opportunities in Rural Areas") in which a new rural typology for Europe was created. EDORA aimed to investigate development opportunities in different types of rural areas. It is related to the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in the framework of the Agenda 2000, which identifies opportunities for rural development.

The EDORA project provided evidence on the development opportunities of diverse types of European rural areas and revealed options for improving their competitiveness by analyzing regional strengths through territorial cooperation. The potential impact of climate change on the development opportunities of rural areas was also highlighted in the presentation. More to the point, Copus said that the project relates to policies created by local actors that in turn relate to local conditions. Furthermore, Copus claimed that these are drivers and processes of rural change, and main challenges are land based industries that create spiral effects of decline and disadvantages. Geographical remoteness is also associated with decline and disadvantage. This still holds good in some parts of Rural Europe, but in others recent changes mean that they are becoming out of date. As a tool for benchmarking regions, Copus argued that there is no end in making typologies to support policy makers in comparative analysis.

A new rural typology – why? Copus gave some answers:

• To take a typology beyond the urban-rural dimension – to integrate economic (sectoral) structure, and overall "performance".
• To highlight the inadequacy of common misleading stereotypes about rural areas, as background to rural/regional policy debate.
• To create a simple, but meaningful, (macro)regional framework for analysis of rural trends, consideration of future perspectives, and policy implications.
• To help regional and national policymakers to "benchmark" their regions in a broad European context.

But the EDORA typology cannot be strictly a typology of pure rural areas, that for two reasons:

The first one is of theoretical character: rural areas do not function separately from adjacent urban areas – they are connected by a dense web of interactions.

The second one is practical: Smallest practicable data units are NUTS 3(2), and most of these areas contain also sizable towns/cities.

Given these reasons, the EDORA is a typology of Intermediate and Predominantly Rural Regions and covers the whole ESPON Space.

Copus presented also three different types of rural areas:

- Dijkstra-Poelman type
- Structural type
- Performance type

The conclusions, partly adjusted to the NORBA space:

•The three generalizations (types) are quite inadequate as a basis for rural cohesion policy as the rural reality is far more complex, and "mixed" (not always in a negative way).
• There are substantial contrasts between Nordic and Baltic regions, and between individual countries.
• Some "broad-brush" (European macro-regions) patterns can be identified, which need to be accommodated within rural/regional policy.
• More specifically the Structural Typology focuses on the difficult issue concerning the relative roles of CAP and Cohesion Policy.

These generalizations and types should, however, be seen complementary, rather than competing.

Lisa Van Well from Nordregio chaired the panel discussion on the first day. The participants are from the left Ole Damsgaard (Nordregio), Jean Peyrony (DG Regio), Andrew Copus (UHI and Nordregio) Odd Godal (Norwegian member of ESPON MC), Sverker Lindblad (Swedish member of ESPON MC) and Peter Billing (ESPON CU).

"What can ESPON do for your region?"

Panel discussion based on the earlier presentations

The first day ended with a **panel debate** chaired by **Lisa Van Well** and **Sverker Lindblad, Ole Damsgaard, Peter Billing, Jean Peyrony, Andrew Copus** and **Odd Godal** as participants. Lisa Van Well began the debate by asking the panel participants what ESPON can to for the European regions and what ESPON cannot do for European regions.

Peter Billing claimed that ESPON projects can deliver synthesis results for regions in a larger context, which is important in comparative analysis and policy development. However, a stakeholder should not be expect that ESPON will deliver explicit policy recommendations and be a single reference in regional development work. Jean Peyrony agreed with Billing and underlined that ESPON delivers a macro level perspective on the micro level. He also stressed that ESPON delivers results on different challenges, and that regions learn from each other through ESPON. Ole Damsgaard continued that ESPON can provide a regional overview to put regions in a EU context rather than national or more restricted contexts. However, the themes ESPON deals with are European Commission related issues that in this framework can be seen as mainstream. ESPON should mainly be considered as a source for structural overviews; however it rarely delivers results on processes, which Damsgaard considered as important in future projects.

Andrew Copus claimed then that for most people, ESPON is associated with maps and indicators, which is a fairly inductive approach implying few real policy recommendations or models. In the EDORA-project, they tried to have a more

deductive approach, bridging empirical results with science and policy. This is the strength of ESPON, to be a link between the academy and the policy sphere. Copus continued with proposing ESPON as a think-thank that can deliver broad perspectives on regional development.

Odd Godal emphasised then that ESPON is a network for data, information and for different networking activities, in which researchers exchange experiences. Sverker Lindblad underlined that ESPON can give a comparative view on regional development in a larger context. However, the usefulness of ESPON is rather limited because few projects are demand driven, implying that there is a mismatch between what is done within the ESPON framework and actual policy development. On the other hand, the ESPON priority 2 projects make a difference as they are demand driven. It is more difficult to make use of results from ESPON applied research projects compared to priority 2 projects and other applied research projects from, e.g., the OECD, which has a clear demand framework and deliver useful results.

Van Well continued by asking what regions can learn from each other through ESPON. Andrew Copus claimed that they have not seen any real cases where regions have learned anything from the research conducted within the ESPON programme. Sverker Linblad filled in and said that having dialogues and using ESPON results can be important in development work, but to do this, learning is needed.

Van Well continued by asking whether ESPON provides evidence for all regions in the EU area - whether ESPON is relevant for all types regions, rural as well as city regions or functional urban areas as well as administrative regions. Sverker Lindblad said that one problem with ESPON is the mismatch between what is conducted within the ESPON programme and the real challenges that regions are facing. As such, there seems to be a missing link between ESPON and actual development work or regional challenges. Furthermore, Lindblad continued with explaining that it is hard to see a strong link between ESPON and stakeholders because of a widespread need of interpretation of results and main messages from the ESPON work and reports.

Van Well rounded off the debate by asking the panel for the main messages from the first day of the NORBA conference and some recommendations to improve the work conducted within ESPON. Jean Peyrony said that he believes there is a need to improve the link between ESPON and other EU-programs, and to contribute to constructive ECPs. Andrew Copus said that the main point from the first day of the NORBA conference was from the DG Regio that ESPON should have specific policy relevance. Sverker Lindblad said that ESPON could work more with disseminating of ESPON results and improve their analytical approach through e.g. using functional regions in their reporting instead of the common NUTS regions.

The NORBA conference was not only focused on presentations – a lot of small discussions and networking between the participants were also of central importance. More pictures are to be found at the NORBA website http://rha.is/norba.

Presentations at the NORBA conference 4 February

Folke Snickars, who was the chair during the second day, welcomed all the participants to a new session with focus on international aspects in national and regional planning.

Outlooks towards Europe in national planning of the Northern and Baltic countries - an overview

Niels Boje Groth (KVL, Denmark)

Nils Boje Groth started with giving an overview on different approaches in national spatial planning from a European point of view. Groth claimed that in terms of spatial planning, we are not talking about a plan itself but a vision about what should be done and how to do it. As such, spatial planning is a vision of how a nation should function. Furthermore, Groth continued, stakeholders in spatial planning are anonymous but can be seen as a range of unknown people with an interest in spatial planning and visions for future generations. It creates polycentric ideas and cooperation zones. There are a few central concepts in spatial planning, such as the ESDP, which is a general source facilitating knowledge about spatial planning. It also invites stakeholders to take part in future planning and by doing so they enable a good standard of living for future generations. Spatial planning is as such an *ideal of visions,* denoting what should be done and how. This can, for example, be development of urban-rural systems or infrastructure systems that integrate different development perspectives.

Niels Groth also gave some concrete examples from the NORBA-countries and how they have worked with spatial planning over time. In Sweden, there was no spatial planning perspective before the national strategy. Swedish spatial planning has since then focused on cooperation. Sweden has also worked with spatial planning through the EU structural funds. In general, the Swedish planning system is a decentralized planning system, where planning traditionally is made by municipalities. Ultimately, Sweden aims at approaching planning with a functional perspective, focusing on real needs and potentials of growth. The most influential spatial perspective in Sweden is, according to Niels Groth, the idea of polycentricity. In Denmark, spatial planning is traditionally related to urban networks with ambitions to attain rank as national centers. This dual polycentric perspective has been used to connect cities together. However, it has been given up since there are only two main centres or growing regions in Denmark. The spatial planning perspective is to be highlighted in Denmark through creating new links and relationships between actors. Spatial planning in Finland is constituted by a synthesis of four visions of the future spatial structure in Finland approaching potentials in development. This was to be organized through the creation of corridors of cooperation but have however been reshaped to a national polycentric spatial planning perspective constructed upon not a regional but a national polycentric vision. Groth also stressed the development of spatial planning perspective in the Baltic countries, such as Estonia, which has created a vision of a future spatial development.

Furthermore, Groth stressed that in spatial planning, it is useful to employ typologies and lay emphasis on cooperation, relations and functionality. He also asked what comes after a vision in spatial planning – another vision?

Groth also said that in spatial planning, which often deals with a development perspective, infrastructure and cooperation with neighbours are of great importance. However, here ESPON can bring important contributions as the European Union has intentions to take on board a broader perspective on spatial development. To do this we need stakeholder outlooks and move from regional policy to regional development policy and create an integrated competitive space directed towards infrastructure and cooperation between cities. For this purpose we need stakeholder outlooks. Policy integration is one of the key issues in the future, more than data and new concepts. Nevertheless, there is a danger with spatial planning as we try to create win-win situations: can everyone be a winner?

Niels Boje Groth made an overview of national planning in Europe and the BSR-region (on the left) while Carl Johan Engström discussed spatial planning from a local perspective (on the right)

The need for interplay between international and national planning perspectives – reflections from a local perspective

Carl-Johan Engström (KTH, Division of Urban and Regional Studies, Stockholm, Sweden)

Carl Johan Engström from KTH talked about the need for interplay between international and national planning perspectives and gave some concrete perspectives through examples on how Uppsala municipality, his former employer, has worked to integrate different perspectives in their spatial planning. First of all, Engström said, planning is mainly a task for municipalities, but that municipality planning is working in a new reality. The regional policy has changed from balanced regional development through equalization to regional development policy based on the strengths of each region. Today, regional development also mainly takes place in urban core areas and focus is on accessibility, urban regeneration and towns in networks. The urban planning has also been changed from regulatory land use planning – i.e. government - to strategic municipal development – i.e. governance.

In Uppsala, they have gained from different spatial perspectives but not employed any concrete ESPON results in the development work. Instead they have used planning documents with a national perspective. To do this they used consultants to create an integrated perspective between Uppsala and other areas, which they found useful.

The development strategy of Uppsala can be summarized in the following points:

- sustainable city vision
- city branding
- horizontal cooperation (triple helix)
- vertical cooperation (national agencies)
- international cooperation (regions with similar development conditions)

Engström said that in Sweden there are no spatial plans at the regional level apart from the plan for the Stockholm region. He also spoke about different strategic planning processes, from a forum to an arena, which have provided useful insights for Uppsala's development work. As such, spatial planning has had a role and improved the perspectives of Uppsala municipality. Engström also said that there are some obvious potentials with an integrated perspective in planning and development work, and he especially stressed the importance of considering both national and international arenas.

Engström concluded that it is urgent to develop an organized international interplay with EU spatial planning, EU urban policy etc from a local perspective; prerequisites are development of competent regional bodies and actors with a mandate to coordinate a national spatial planning perspective.

Finnish planning meets Europe

Timo Turunen (Ministry of the Environment, Finland)

Timo Turunen from the Finnish Ministry of the Environment discussed under the title "Finnish planning meets Europe" how spatial planning in Finland has developed since the middle of 1990s. The shift from being focused on a pure national perspective to a more integrated perspective in planning and development work implies that Finnish spatial planning has also paid attention to the integration of Finland with other countries and regions. Turunen claimed that Finland has good opportunities to achieve a polycentric development and that they have succeeded to create an interactive interplay between Finland and other areas through effective spatial planning.

Turunen underlined that the development of polycentric structure in Finland should be based on the strengths of different parts of the country, bearing in mind the advantages and utilize the existing location patterns and infrastructure. Urban regions should be developed as coherent and attractive entities in order to stimulate polycentric development. Another central ingredient that should be considered is that diversified centres of know-how and economic activities in different parts of Finland should be built up as international and national focal points. Turonen highlighted also that the Helsinki region should be developed as a European metropolitan area in order to support economic development in other parts of Finland.

With regard to Finland's position in Europe it is, according to Turunen, important to take advantage of the potentials of the Baltic Sea Region and develop it as a strong and attractive cooperation area for European growth. Finland should, also, actively develop cooperation zones over borders in northern and eastern Finland and cooperation with Norway, Sweden and different parts of Finland should be

deepened to make stronger connections and development options from Atlantic to Russia. At the same time as the Barents region with huge natural resources should come into focus, the Helsinki Metropolitan Region shall play a central role in the network of cities in the northern part of the Baltic Sea region. All these points will result in that the Bothnian Arc will be developed as a central area of the northern parts of Europe.

Turunen ended with the proposal that Finland and its regions need a strong Europe and Europe needs a strong Finland and its regions. Every region or place in Finland has also something to offer, more or less. It is, then, important to take advantage of all possibilities. Here, Finnish regional planning has tried to integrate regionally desirable development paths into a unified and strong national entity as a part of European context, which will contribute to inter-regional co-operation and the best possible utilization of the joint resources. Here has different planning documents come to play a role and been useful to integrate the Finnish planning system in a broader context.

The chair asked whether the Finnish planning system has tried to maximize the amount of money from EUs structural funds or if it is characterized by a more rigid planning vision? Turunen said that there has not been any explicit aim to gain money from the EU structural funds.

Timo Turunen (on the left) talked about Finnish planning meets Europe" and Inguna Urtane (on the right) about the development of regional planning in Latvia.

Development of the Regional planning concept for the next programming period

Inguna Urtane (Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, Latvia)

Inguna Urtane started the "Baltic session" by talking about how Latvia has developed a regional planning concept for the next program period. This included the shapening of the spatial planning work and its impact on the development of Latvia, how they organized the work and some of the priority areas. Up today the regional planning has included too many priorities with fragmentation and overlapping proposals. Latvia has, Inguna Urtane said, developed a reflection on Europe by employing different planning concepts and documents. She noted that for the first time in the Latvian history, they have succeeded to construct and adopt a spatial planning strategy, which they regard as a good step towards an integrated perspective in the future spatial planning. The next step in Latvian

planning is to create a national development plan. The "Sustainable Development Strategy Latvija 2030" was approved by the Latvian Parliament in June 2010, and it is the hierarchically highest long-term development planning document in Latvia ever. Tasks for next programming period are to ensure wider support for targeted areas according to the SDP, e.g.:

- establishment and implementation of specific territorial support measures
- wider support for implementation of local strategies and initiatives, including support for improvement of business environment, improvement of the mobility and development of the public services.

As a reflection on ESPON, Inguna Urtane said that ESPONs results have been too complex to work with in the Latvian development work and to use in any comparative studies.

The chair added that it is interesting that Latvia has employed new perspectives and the latest techniques to come up with these spatial planning documents.

Linking the Estonian national spatial plan Estonia 2030+ with the European and Baltic spatial strategies

Tavo Kikas (Estonian Ministry of Internal Affairs, Estonia)

Tavo Kikas started by presenting the planning system in Estonia that consists of four levels – national, regional and general plans at a municipality level, and also detailed plans at municipality level. Kikas presented then how Estonia has worked to link the spatial development vision in Estonia (Estonia 2030+) with the European and Baltic spatial strategies. The National Plan "Estonia 2030+" is dealing both with land and maritime areas, but also with the spatial connections with other countries. The goal is to guide the integrated development of settlement structures and nationwide infrastructures, taking into account the regional specifications. Central ingredients in the Spatial Development Vision 2030+ are that Estonia shall be well integrated to the rest of the world, characterized by varied living conditions, well-connected settlement network and good natural environment.

The national plan Estonia 2010 can be summarized in the following points;

- Meeting spatially the basic needs of population;
- Preserving and developing values of Estonian settlement system and landscape structure;
- Spatial balancing of the settlement structure;
- Good spatial connectivity of Estonia and the rest of Europe;
- Preserving and improving a good state of natural environment.

Kikas declared also that VASAB has been useful to provide perspectives on the national plan of Estonia. However, such planning documents cannot be used to understand what is going on inside Estonia and thus may not be used in development work within Estonia. Instead, they are considered as complements and contributors of new ideas about how to work with spatial development work in Estonia.

Tavo Kikas underlined that the Estonian development planning is still in progress, but that they considered it as important to position of Estonia in a wider context, putting it into a Baltic and European perspective. This approach has, for example,

helped them in thinking about efficiency and smart solutions in energy supply today and in the future. They also want their spatial planning document to be an effective story-telling plan as well as a good action plan. Before they introduced spatial planning concepts, they lack a real good action plan although the principles of the national plan were good. The spatial planning perspective has helped in improving this.

Tavo Kikas (on the left) focused on the national plan ESTONIA 2030+ and Marija Burinskiene (on the right) on the development of Lithuanian regional planning.

The development of regional planning in Lithuania
Marija Burinskiene (Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, Lithuania)

Marija Burinskiene, who is Lithuanian ECP and professor at Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, talked about how regional planning in Lithuania has developed by checking different types of planning at different levels. There are four levels of plans in Lithuania:

I – national plans (approved by the government);
II – county plans (approved by the county government);
III– municipal plans (approved by the local municipality);
IV – plans organized by private and legal entities (approved by legal entities).

Burinskiene underlined also that there are two official regional policies conducting in Lithuania:

1. EU regional policy in order to reach the average level of economy of EU

2. National regional policy in order to implement this policy in the regions with biggest economic or social problems and create programmes to recover these regions.

The aim of the regional policy is, thus, to reduce regional socioeconomic disparities within the country. Strategic provisions of Lithuanian national policy are incorporated into EU structural support for national regional policy. Target territories and sectors are:

- Regional centers (7 cities);
- Problem territories (14 municipalities);
- Ignalina nuclear power plant region (3 municipalities).
- Visaginas municipality.
- Target sector – rural development, diversification of rural economy.
-

The Lithuanian regional policy and long-term goals are to ensure a high quality of life for all inhabitants of the country. Until 2013 social and territorial cohesion are prioritized. At a county level, the average standard of living, measured as the

average annual income shall not be lower than 75 percent of the national average, and the unemployment rate should be not more than 35 percent higher than the average unemployment rate.

A challenge has been to find out which actors shall be involved in order to describe the very complex picture of the Lithuania structural conditions. Nevertheless, Lithuania has succeeded to work with an improved spatial planning and integrating the development preconditions with relevant actors. Marija Burinskiene emphasized the importance of integrating different plans and actors to achieve different synergies. Nevertheless, she revealed, there have been some problems in developing efficient plans in Lithuania. For example, at the housing market a new largely private ownership structure which has made any development planning difficult. As a result it has been difficult to consider e.g. social housing in the Lithuanian spatial planning. Therefore, she said, it is important to integrate different planning perspectives in future planning contexts and analyses.

Folke Snickars chaired the closing panel discussion about the need for international aspects in regional planning and policies. The participants were, from the left, Inguna Urtane, Tavo Kikas, Niels Boje Groth, Heikki Eskelinen and Christer Bengs

The need for international aspects in regional planning and policies
Closing panel discussion

The conference ended with a **panel debate** chaired by **Folke Snickars** and with **Heikki Eskelinen, Niels Boje Groth, Christer Bengs, Tavo Kikas and Inguna Urtane** as panel discussants. Folke Snickars started up the concluding panel debate by asking the members of the panel to:

- Reflect on the most useful new knowledge in spatial planning that have taking place in this meeting
- Consider how to effectively deal with implementation of planning visions and concepts

- Whether ESPON can contribute to encounter concentration of forces in the cohesion policy, and if the EU cohesion policy is an effective way to deal with these future challenges

Niels Boje Groth underlined that the topics of discussion have not changed since ESPON started. Questions like how stakeholder can and should utilize ESPON results are still much debated. **Folke Snickars** asked why it is difficult to achieve progress on this. **Christer Bengs** said that one reason is that the applied research conducted in the ESPON program lacks in academic reliability, i.e. the quality is not good enough to be used in real planning contexts, especially when academic research is available. Another reason, Bengs continued, could be that politicians are more interested in the decision-making procedures than facts about challenges and potentials.

Niels Boje Groth assumed that ESPON results are not straightforward enough to be used in practice. Groth continued that at the same time, it is known from the past that when new concepts such as the pentagon were introduced in the 1980s and 1990s they became models for visions and future studies. Moreover, it is difficult to provide ESPON results to politicians, as they need to be interpreted a priori in order to be used. Niels Boje Groth concluded that it is for that reason important that ESPON researchers make stakeholders to understand what is behind the data and how they can be used.

Another important outcome of the NORBA conference, Groth argued, is the experiences expressed on the difficulties in implementing visions and plans. Since visions are about potentials, are you able to implement potentials, Niels Boje Groth asked, and continued by saying that potentials are something that you explore and not implement. As such, what ESPON needs is another way of thinking, another way of paradigm.

Christer Bengs continued and said that the main idea behind ESPON is not to produce new and interesting results, i.e. new insights, and to be applicable but to make researchers to integrate and to be a social arena for researchers in spatial planning in Europe. This has been revealed over these two days and is an important outcome from the NORBA conference. Christer Bengs also said that ESPON is simply isolated from the real development work and that it has become a peninsula way to work producing results for its own group of people. If ESPON is to be a forerunner in spatial planning, a better matching must be achieved between demand and supply.

Tavo Kikas underlined that we have seen how ESPON can support thinking about spatial planning in various countries, on what is possible and good to work with and examples on which development models that are relevant to work with. Nevertheless, there is a lack of understanding between different planning perspectives. Deeper relations should be created between different planning contexts.

Inguna Urtane highlighted that ESPON has an impact on national and regional planning by giving inputs concerning which priorities are possible to work with, what tools to use and what to focus on in different planning procedures. This is useful and contributes to more effective ways in working with future challenges.

Heikki Eskelinen positioned the role NORBA in the preceding debate by emphasizing that a macro-regional level is important in assessing the utilization

of research results, and linking them with the actual practice of planning and policy-making.

Folke Snickars closed the panel discussion by thanking the participants for an inspiring discussion and left the final words to **Mats Johansson.** He reminded once again that this conference was the first of the NORBA conferences. Mats Johansson thanked Nordregio for their hospitality and cooperation, the ESPON CU for all their assistance, the speakers and the NORBA team and last but not least the audience that was a precondition for a successful conference. Next activity will be a student session in Roskilde back to back with the Nordic Geographers Meeting, May 24-27 2011.

Mats Johansson closed the first NORBA conference and the NORBA-team started to prepare the next steps (Mats Johansson and Simon Falck are missing)

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