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# **Connecting Territorial Knowledge Arenas – the Interrelationship between CEMAT and EU Activities in Spatial Development Policy**

**Matti Fritsch**

## **Author information**

Matti Fritsch, University of Eastern Finland, Karelian Institute, P.O. Box 111, FIN-80101 Joensuu, Finland  
Email: matti.fritsch@uef.fi

## **Abstract**

*Against the background of the increasing importance of evidence, knowledge and learning in both domestic and transnational policy development processes, this paper analyses how non-EU and intra-European Union knowledge arenas in spatial development policy and planning are connected by focussing specifically on the interrelationship between CEMAT and European Union activities and arenas of co-operation. The Council of Europe Conference of Ministers Responsible for Spatial/Regional Planning (CEMAT) has long served as a platform for pan-European (including both EU members and non-members) co-operation in spatial development, but has recently been sidelined by EU initiatives in this field of activity and even faced the possibility of discontinuation. Analysing potential areas of competition and complementarities/synergies and reviewing the recent Russian CEMAT Presidency, the paper argues that CEMAT retains an important role in connecting EU debates, practices and research with actors outside the European Union. However, institutionalised collaborative mechanisms and the systematic exchange of information between CEMAT and the EU in this field should be strengthened, particularly in a direction from EU to CEMAT and in the domain of research and evidence. Continuing with a sub-optimal level of co-operation between CEMAT and the EU in this field or even discontinuation of CEMAT would undoubtedly hamper the involvement and integration of non-EU members in the debate on European spatial development policy and would probably rather quickly lead to the significant disruption of the territorial knowledge channel linking the EU and Russia as well as that with the EU neighbourhood more broadly, while also significantly inhibiting the processes of learning on a pan-European level and stalling the development of a trajectory towards the emergence of something that would resemble a pan-European ‘epistemic community’ in spatial development policy and planning.*

**Keywords:** Council of Europe, CEMAT, territorial cohesion, European integration, spatial planning, epistemic community

## 1. Introduction

As European Union territorial governance and spatial development policy slowly but surely progresses on a variety of fronts, increasing attention should be paid to the question of how such activities, which in the long run potentially influence the territorial development of the European continent as a whole, connect to arenas, initiatives and activities in spatial development *outside* the European Union. Particular attention here should moreover be given to countries that do not currently have, or expect to receive, ‘entry perspective’ status. This emphasises the role of, and interrelationship between, collaborative organisations in spatial development policy as facilitators of exchange between knowledge arenas across the external border of the European Union. The examination of these inter-organisational dynamics is at the heart of this paper.

Interestingly, a forum for interaction on spatial development questions between EU members and non-members already existed before any significant initiative was taken at the (internal) EU-level in this field, namely, the *Conference of Ministers Responsible for Spatial/Regional Planning* (CEMAT)<sup>1</sup> organised under the umbrella of the Council of Europe (CoE). Indeed, it was in CEMAT where the international dimension of spatial development was first recognised and articulated as an important matter in respect of potential European co-operation. Since the late 1980s, both CEMAT and European Union activities in this field have proceeded alongside but independently of each other. This naturally raises questions both in terms of potential synergies and overlap in terms of resources used; particularly as the EU, with the recent enlargements in 2004 and 2007, has extended its territory to cover a significant share of the ‘European’ continent.

CEMAT and intra-European Union activities in this area have however proceeded along different paths in the recent past with EU activities increasingly shifting towards evidence-based or evidence-informed approaches to spatial development policy (Davoudi 2006; Faludi and Waterhout 2006), as exemplified by the ESPON research programme, whereas CEMAT largely remains a political forum for the development of spatial development doctrines and policy images. Nevertheless, it is this difference that provides the most interesting scope for co-operation between the two arenas in the future.

CEMAT is clearly important to those European countries that are not currently - and probably never will be - members of the European Union, as it represents the only multi-lateral forum that provides access to European spatial development policy-making, practice and, to a more limited extent, research. In this context, the Russian Federation’s role in CEMAT and its relationship with European (Union) spatial planning provides an interesting case in point, not only because the neglect of the Russian dimension would render “any discussion on European territorial development [...] incomplete” (Adams *et al.* 2011: 19), but also due to the fact that Russia recently held the CEMAT Presidency for about 3 years and thus had a unique opportunity to shape the pan-European debate on spatial development policy.

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<sup>1</sup> The acronym is derived from its French name, *Conférence Européenne des Ministres responsables de l’Aménagement du Territoire*.

The crucial question then is how this engagement between the respective spatial planning and territorial governance knowledge arenas in the Russian Federation and European Union is organised, including institutional dynamics between collaborative arenas.

Building on theoretical approaches that emphasise the increasing importance of knowledge, learning and evidence in both domestic and transnational policy development processes, the key aim of this paper is thus to explore how CEMAT and its activities are connected to intra-European Union knowledge arenas and to what extent the organisation could function as a transfer medium and forum for experience and competence exchange between EU and non-EU spatial planning, practice and research. After addressing some basic theoretical considerations, the paper introduces CEMAT as an arena for co-operation in spatial planning and territorial governance and explores the wider relationship between the European Union and the Council of Europe. This is followed by an examination of the intricate relationship between CEMAT and intra-European Union initiatives and activities in spatial development policy from a CEMAT point of view. The paper then focuses on the specific involvement of Russia, a country that is not expected to become a member of the European Union, in CEMAT activities by highlighting Russia's CEMAT-Presidency from 2007 to 2010. Conclusions on the interrelationship between CEMAT and EU activities in spatial development policy are then drawn. The findings of the paper are based on a review of the relevant CEMAT and EU documents and on interviews carried out with six experts from four different countries (Russia, Finland, Germany and France) each of whom have long been involved in CEMAT and EU activities, and in some cases both.

## **2. Knowledge, Evidence and Policy Development in European Spatial Development Policy**

In its widest sense, spatial development policy concerns policy-making and policy co-ordination that pays attention to territorial matters and has a spatial focus. This rather wide-ranging characterisation already points to the relative ambiguity and almost “esoteric” (Evers 2008: 303) nature of the policy field in question. In practice, spatial development policy and ‘regional planning’ (CEMAT terminology) mainly relate to strategic planning, visioning exercises, development frameworks/doctrines, sectoral co-ordination and regional policy action elaborated in a variety of collaborative mechanisms and initiatives. Against the background of European Union integration, a number of mid-range-theories have been used to explain the inner workings and actor relations engaged in processes of international and transnational policy co-ordination in the field of spatial development policy, including ‘new institutionalism’, ‘policy networks’ and ‘epistemic communities’ (Dühr *et al.* 2010; Faludi 2000). The added-value of the notion of ‘epistemic communities’ lies in the fact that it is actor-centred and brings the dimension of knowledge and information, and thus learning, into the equation (Haas 1992), which, as noted previously, have gained prominence in the recent territorial development debate. Assuming that they share the normative and causal beliefs upon which they base their joint professional competence and policy views, i.e. a common style of thinking or Weltanschauung, epistemic communities are defined as “a network of professionals with

recognised expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain or issue-area” (Haas 1992: 3). By providing this policy-relevant knowledge and interacting with policy-makers, these epistemic communities can have significant influence and leverage on decisions and orientations being made in particular policy fields. This is not restricted to domestic/national realms but also extends to international/transnational arenas, since the policy influence of epistemic communities, via international politics shaped by their influence, can be diffused internationally and transnationally and thus “[...] become the basis of new or changed international practices and institutions” (Adler & Haas 1992: 373).

In the field of spatial development policy, the production and utilisation of policy-relevant knowledge has gained increasing importance and has resulted in a closer and, sometimes uneasy, relationship between policy-making (or politics) and science (for somewhat contrasting views on this topic see Davoudi 2007 and Bengs 2004). Regardless of the wider implications and complexities of this interrelationship, ‘evidence-based’ or ‘evidence-informed’ approaches to spatial policy-making emphasise the need for territorial information and knowledge in order to develop and strengthen the knowledge base of both researchers and decision-makers (Davoudi 2007). The lack of such a “knowledge base about Europe’s spatial organisation and development” became painfully obvious during the preparation of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP), which led to the subsequent setting up of the ESPON research programme in order to remedy the problem (Faludi & Waterhout 2006: 9). The follow-up document of the ESDP, the Territorial Agenda of the European Union (BMVBS 2007a) could already build on a significantly stronger evidence-base, mainly provided by ESPON, which was drawn together in a separate but accompanying document entitled, “The Territorial State and Perspectives of the European Union” (BMVBS 2007b). This, however, does not mean that the document had a strong impact on the policy-making community.

Haas (1992) and Haas & Adler (1992) stress the agenda-setting role and influence of epistemic communities particularly in conditions of uncertainty, complexity, and interdependence, where expert knowledge from beyond state apparatuses is required to develop policies and approaches to complex issues and new challenges. This need for policy advice, or more accurately the need for information and knowledge to inform policy-making processes is not, however, confined to national arenas, but also extends to intergovernmental and supranational processes of policy development. The above-mentioned conditions of uncertainty, complexity, and interdependence are all certainly of relevance to spatial development policy co-operation and territorial governance across the external borders of the European Union. The EU’s eastern neighbourhood in general and the Russian Federation in particular serve as important cases in point here. Increasing territorial interdependencies facilitated by the gradual opening of formerly closed borders and increasing economic exchange in addition to other challenges such as urbanisation coupled with rural depopulation and uneven territorial development, make a case for increased policy co-ordination and co-operation between the European Union and Russia. Both have also recognised this officially in their *Memorandum of Understanding for Establishing a Dialogue on Regional Policy* between the EU Commission and the

Ministry of Regional Development of the Russian Federation, which concludes that “[q]uestions regarding regional and territorial development become ever more important, not only because the European Union and the Russian Federation share common borders but also because they cover territories of a continental scale which leads to similar large-scale problems” (CEC 2007). However, when it comes to EU-Russian co-operation in such an ambiguous and also to some extent geopolitically sensitive field as spatial development policy, considerable uncertainties remain in relation to identifying the appropriate actors and co-operation fora.

In terms of intra-European Union spatial development policy, the concept of ‘epistemic communities’ has been used in analyses of processes of co-operation by, for example, Faludi (1997) who refers to the emergence of an epistemic community of a ‘roving band of planners’ forming around the ESDP process. Pallagst (2006, see also 2011) uses the concept in her analysis of the interrelationship between the EU’s eastern enlargement and the challenge to extend European spatial planning to the CEE countries by proposing two possible scenarios: (1) retention – i.e. continued separation between eastern and western European spheres and epistemic communities and (2) merger – i.e. the conceptualisation of Eastern and Western Europe as a single space and concomitant merger of its epistemic communities. However, the actual composition of epistemic communities in the field of spatial development policy often remains shrouded in mystery. Indeed, Waterhout (2011) questions whether a European spatial planning epistemic community does indeed still actually exist, as has been the case during the ESDP process (see Faludi 1997), which was relatively limited in scope and confined to a small number of active and influential planners that shared the conviction that advancing European Union integration should be accompanied by some form of European spatial planning. These doubts about the existence of a such an epistemic community are fuelled by the continuously enlarging set of heterogeneous actors and experts involved in or linked to spatial planning, who do not necessarily share the same causal and normative beliefs as regards the need for, and indeed content of, European Union spatial development policy and planning, but often, for example, represent sectoral interests (Waterhout 2011). Nevertheless, the question of how to connect the EU’s internal and external dimensions of co-operation and policy development in spatial planning and territorial governance justifies an exploration of existing or potential arenas and communities that cross or span the external border of the European Union and potentially provide non-EU actors with access to and influence on EU debates and practices.

The relationship between knowledge and policy development in the field of spatial development policy has been extensively explored on the theoretical level by Adams *et al.* (2011) who, by drawing on approaches such as ‘epistemic communities’ (Haas 1992, Adler & Haas 1992), ‘communities of practice’ (Wenger 1998) and ‘advocacy coalitions’ (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith 1993; Sabatier 1998), examine the role of ‘territorial knowledge channels’ in the context of the EU’s eastern enlargement and its implications for European spatial planning and territorial governance. The concept of territorial knowledge channels is built on “the notion that ‘knowledge resources’ (ideas, data, arguments) are channelled into ‘knowledge arenas’ where they are tested/validated or subject to debate/institutionalised rules of policy evaluation, or employed selectively in

the representation of policy problems/opportunities or in the advancement of vested interests” (Adams *et al.* 2011: 27). In this context, organisations and platforms of co-operation and interaction between and within territorial knowledge communities, are seen as “key sites for knowledge production and utilisation” (*ibid.*: 28). Within this theoretical conceptualisation, CEMAT would represent a pan-European knowledge arena engaged mainly in knowledge utilisation, rather than production, due to the fact it is largely concerned with the development of policy doctrines, for which a certain territorial knowledge, according to recent ‘evidence-based’ approaches, would be necessary.

### **3. Spatial and Regional Planning as a Domain in the Council of Europe: CEMAT**

The Conference of Ministers Responsible for Spatial/Regional Planning (CEMAT) is the oldest forum for international co-operation in spatial and regional planning in Europe. The Conference works under the auspices of the Council of Europe (CoE) and represents a specifically pan-European or ‘continental’ forum or knowledge arena, for spatial policy co-operation and interaction. This pan-European outlook is both the result of and motivation for the inclusion of countries from beyond the external borders of the European Union, which is in turn a product of the wide membership of the Council of Europe; currently 47 European states. The Council of Europe was founded in 1949 in order to initiate European integration by focussing on the promotion of human rights, the rule of law and democracy. According to its statutes (Article 3 & 4), “any European state which is deemed to be able and willing to fulfil” [...] “the principles of the rule of law and of the enjoyment by all persons within its jurisdiction of human rights and fundamental freedoms” can join.

The geopolitical upheaval during the early 1990s and subsequent extension of the eastern reach of the Council of Europe - and its wider agenda of values of human rights, democracy and rule of law - brought Russia and many other eastern European countries into the realm of Western European democratic practices and political thinking. The Russian Federation joined the Council of Europe, and thus CEMAT, in 1996, slightly later than most other Eastern European countries that belonged to the former Eastern bloc. In many cases, membership in the Council of Europe represented a prelude to, and preparation for, membership in the European Union. Indeed, no country has ever joined the European Union without having first been a member of the Council of Europe. This is an interesting footnote to the extent that when Russia joined the Council of Europe in 1996 it still held out the potential for EU membership. However, against the ongoing background of significant discord between the EU and Russia, and Russia’s own ambitions and assertiveness as an international actor since the early 2000s, the prospect of EU membership for the Russian Federation is now, and for the foreseeable future, highly unlikely. This continued exclusion, and Russia’s own policy of self-exclusion from the European Union, undoubtedly however increases the importance of the Council of Europe both with regard to Russia’s connection to Western Europe more generally and, specifically, in relation to Western Europe’s interaction with Russia on an institutional basis outside the EU framework.

In addition to these wider politico-democratic issues, involvement in the CoE provided the opportunity for Russia to take part in ‘practical’ inter-governmental (inter-ministerial) interaction and co-operation in specific policy areas; one such area being spatial development policy and regional planning as part of the CEMAT activities. CEMAT, currently part of the Heritage and Landscape division of the Council of Europe, can look back on 40 years of pan-European collaboration on spatial/regional planning.

Institutionalised co-operation within the CEMAT framework began in 1970 in Bonn, Germany, with the first European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning. This Conference took inspiration from a report that was published two years earlier by the then Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe entitled ‘Regional Planning: A European Problem’ (Council of Europe 1968), which “highlighted the broad aims and particular target areas of a European regional planning and it also suggested the steps to be taken and the instruments required for a European solution to the various challenges facing the different governments of Europe” (Déjeant-Pons 2003, 402). From that point on, CEMAT has adopted a number of documents and organised numerous seminars and conferences intended to guide the development and implementation of European spatial development policies through its guiding principles and policy doctrines in line with the fundamental goals of sustainable development and social cohesion, which was later extended to include territorial cohesion to coincide with the concept’s entrance into the wider European debate.

The most important documents that CEMAT has produced over the course of its development thus far include the European Regional/Spatial Planning Charter adopted in Torremolinos in 1983, which, for instance, provided an early and frequently referred-to definition of what spatial/regional planning means and entails. CEMAT has also published knowledge resources that include the Spatial Development Glossary (CEMAT 2007) and the Pan-European Compendium on National Spatial Planning Policies thus providing the European community of planners with the requisite tools, not the least of which was a common language to engage in co-operation beyond their national planning communities. A milestone in CEMAT’s activities was reached when, in 2000, the Guiding Principles for Sustainable Spatial Development of the European Continent were adopted during the EXPO 2000 in Hannover (Germany) (CEMAT 2000). The Guiding Principles, which in addition to the time of publication, share many common features with the intra-EU European Spatial Planning Perspective (ESDP) published in 1999 (CEC 1999), were later developed in the Recommendation Rec. (2002)1, which emphasised the continental dimension and aimed to provide a common doctrine for territorial development in Europe. The fact that the Guiding Principles were adopted in Germany, in addition to the fact that the first CEMAT Ministerial Conference took place in Bonn and that the Torremolinos Charter was developed with significant German involvement, indicates the Germans’ preference for CEMAT as a forum for co-operation in European spatial development policy and, more widely, their long-standing preference for intergovernmental rather than supranational co-ordination in this field (Faludi 2010b).

**Table 1. List of CEMAT Ministerial Conferences 1970-2010 (year, location, and theme)**

<b>1st CEMAT</b>	1970	Bonn, Federal Republic of Germany	Foundations of a European regional planning policy
<b>2nd CEMAT</b>	1973	La Grande Motte, France	Objectives of a European regional planning policy
<b>3rd CEMAT</b>	1976	Bari, Italy	Urbanisation and regional planning
<b>4th CEMAT</b>	1978	Vienna, Austria	Planning of rural areas in Europe
<b>5th CEMAT</b>	1980	London, United Kingdom	Achievements and prospects for regional planning in Europe
<b>6th CEMAT</b>	1983	Torremolinos, Spain	Prospects of development and of spatial planning in maritime regions
<b>7th CEMAT</b>	1985	The Hague, The Netherlands	The evolution of the decision-making process in regional spatial planning
<b>8th CEMAT</b>	1988	Lausanne, Switzerland	Rational use of land: base of limiting factor of our development
<b>9th CEMAT</b>	1991	Ankara, Turkey	Instruments for achieving rational use of land
<b>10th CEMAT</b>	1994	Oslo, Norway	Strategy for sustainable regional and spatial development in Europe beyond the
<b>11th CEMAT</b>	1997	Limassol, Cyprus	Sustainable regional and spatial planning in Europe and the protection of the water
<b>12th CEMAT</b>	2000	Hanover, Germany	Joint spatial planning and sustainable development strategy for Europe
<b>13th CEMAT</b>	2003	Ljubljana, Slovenia	Implementation of strategies and visions for sustainable spatial development of the
<b>14th CEMAT</b>	2006	Lisbon, Portugal	Networks for sustainable spatial development of the European continent:
<b>15th CEMAT</b>	2010	Moscow, Russian Federation	Challenge of the Future: Sustainable Spatial Development of the European

The highest decision-making body of CEMAT is the Ministerial Conference, which meets approximately every third year under a specific theme and under the Presidency of one of the CEMAT countries. The themes generally reflect current concerns about territorial development in Europe. In this context Kunzmann (2006: 45) emphasises that the resultant documents often seem to be “timeless accounts of concerns of our time”. Table 1 provides a list of all CEMAT Ministerial Conferences, including their themes. The most recent Ministerial Conference, the 15th, was organised by the Russian Presidency in Moscow in July 2010 under the heading, “Challenge of the Future: Sustainable Spatial Development of the European Continent in a Changing World”, which was also CEMAT’s working programme for the last three years. The 15th Session also marked the 40th anniversary of co-operation within the CEMAT context. Russia

assumed the CEMAT Presidency in 2006 from Portugal at the proposal of Germany – the Ukraine was also considered as a potential candidate – and its term culminated in the already mentioned Ministerial Conference in Moscow. More regular co-operation and co-ordination, and indeed the bulk of the actual, day-to-day work, is carried out by the Steering Committee of the Senior Officials (CSO), which meets approximately twice a year and is composed primarily of senior officials from the national ministries responsible for spatial planning and territorial development in the member states. The CSO is generally chaired by a representative of the country that holds the current CEMAT Presidency.

## **4. The Relationship between the Council of Europe and the European Union**

When examining CEMAT and European Union activities in territorial development one has also to pay attention to the wider relationship between their ‘umbrella’ institutions, that is to say, the European Union and the Council of Europe. Fundamentally, both institutions were set up to work towards European integration. While the Council of Europe consists of 47 member states, covering almost the entire European continent (except Belarus), and co-operates on a strictly inter-governmental basis of common decisions and conventions, the European Union has 27 members states each of whom transfer some of their executive powers to the European Union. Interestingly, the founding of the Council of Europe in 1949 was the result of the initiative of the European federalist movement after the Second World War (Dedman 1996). Their initial hope of setting up a supranational European institution was, however, not fulfilled (*ibid.*), as is evidenced by the continued intergovernmental mode of operation of the CoE. A certain level of supranationalism was nevertheless achieved by the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC, est. 1951) and the European Economic Community (EEC, est. 1957), which thus by-passed the Council of Europe (*ibid.*) and subsequently developed into the EC/EU.

It is important to note in the context of this paper that while spatial/regional planning is not a statutory competence, the European Union has, through its sectoral policies, its involvement in a variety of regional policy initiatives and the recent promotion, in the context of the Lisbon Treaty, of territorial cohesion as a policy objective, undoubtedly an interest in territorial development. In this way an implicit EU territorial agenda is advanced and has been for some time (Faludi 2010a). In consequence however its activities in the spatial development policy realm are often dispersed, de-centred and carried out in co-operation with a variety of actors at a variety of spatial scales. As such, the spatial development policy field represents a key example of EU multi-level governance, with initiatives and responsibilities shared and constantly re-shuffled between multiple territorial and governance levels (Hooghe & Marks 2001; Bache & Flinders 2004).

Synergies, overlap, complementarities, competition and co-operation are all aspects that often come to the fore in discussions on the relationship between the European Union and

the Council of Europe, owing to their similarities in terms of fundamental goals and geographical coverage. Recently, these circumstances were compounded by the rapid expansion of the European Union towards the north and east through the accession rounds in 1995, 2004 and 2007. EU enlargement has led to a situation where ‘Europe’ and the ‘EU’ are frequently used interchangeably and the EU is often seen as the single institutional umbrella and as the ‘voice’ of Europe. Partly in response to this, the Council of Europe is currently attempting to redefine its role as a force in European integration. Its ongoing relationship with an increasingly dominant European Union represents the defining variable in this process. As Jean-Claude Juncker puts it in his report on relations between the Council of Europe and the European Union, which in fact represents an integral element of this very soul searching reform process:

“Although each has enriched the other, the two organisations remain at best a shaky team. Although each has borrowed from the other, they have never been able to make themselves permanently complementary” (Juncker 2006: 2)

Despite the apparent shakiness of their relationship, and despite ongoing concerns over needless competition, co-operation between the two institutions exists and has existed for a long time. Based on an exchange of letters between the two organisations, a dialogue on their relationship and the potentials for co-operation was initiated in earnest during the 1980s, resulting in, firstly, regular quadripartite meetings attended by the EU Presidency, European Commission and the Chairman and Secretary General of the Council of Europe and, secondly, so-called ‘joint programmes’ covering a variety of thematic fields and countries (Council of Europe 2012). Moreover, a Memorandum of Understanding designed to clarify and strengthen the relationship between the two organisations was signed in 2007. The Memorandum explicitly emphasises that,

“[t]he co-operation will take due account of the comparative advantages, the respective competences and expertise of the Council of Europe and the European Union – avoiding duplication and fostering synergy –, search for added value and make better use of existing resources. The Council of Europe and the European Union will acknowledge each other’s experience and standard-setting work, as appropriate, in their respective activities” (CoE/EU 2007).

The Memorandum of Understanding, however, does not refer directly to spatial/regional planning or to spatial development policy as a domain of co-operation between the Council of Europe and the European Union. However, social cohesion, which is a fundamental goal of CEMAT co-operation as well as a statutory competence of the European Union, is referred to and represents an underlying aim of spatial development and cohesion policy. The likely reason for the omission is that the European Union simply does not have a specific statutory competence in spatial/regional planning. It is to be expected, however, that a future version of the Memorandum will certainly include a reference to the policy objective of territorial cohesion, which has since become an EU competence as laid down in the Lisbon Treaty.

## **5. Competition or Complementarities – Channels of Interaction between CEMAT and European Union Activities in Spatial Development Policy**

The wider concerns in respect of potential overlap/competition (interpreted in a negative way) or potential complementarities/synergies (interpreted in a positive way) between the two organisations are also increasingly echoed within the specific thematic field of spatial development policy. CEMAT members highlight this issue themselves in Resolution 1 adopted at the 12th CEMAT Ministerial Conference in 2001 by noting that,

“[...]the dialogue between the European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning (CEMAT) and European institutions, especially the European Commission, and international organisations such as the OECD and the UN institutions (ECE/CSD) on spatial development issues should be intensified, both within Europe and beyond its borders, and that the division of responsibilities among these institutions should be defined more clearly in order to avoid a duplication of activities” (CEMAT 2001: 1).

Further co-ordination and dialogue between CEMAT and the EU in this area may, however, be complicated by what one long-serving CEMAT consultant interviewee referred to as the increasingly ‘monopolistic mentality’ adopted by the EU-level as regards spatial development issues. In a similar fashion, a representative from the EU Commission, who was previously a national representative in CEMAT’s CSO, acknowledged that ‘competition’ in this area between the EU (particularly involving the EU Commission) and CEMAT undoubtedly remains. Against this background of current enlargement fatigue and the consolidation of the EU territory, the shifting centre of gravity towards intra-EU co-operation in the field of spatial development policy, and the potentially exclusionary practices arising as a result, questions over the current and future involvement of non-EU European countries in this pan-European policy field emerge.

Historical developments in European co-operation on territorial development are of significant importance in this respect. CEMAT can be regarded as the cradle of international co-operation in the field of territorial development. From the 1960s to the 1980s in particular it provided European spatial planners with a home, after it became clear that regional policy and spatial planning would not become a field of activity of the European Economic Community during the ‘doldrums’ of European integration (Faludi 2010b, see also Faludi 2009 and Kunzmann 2006). During the last two decades however the tide has again turned in the EU’s favour thus challenging the role of CEMAT and to some extent even sidelining it. Faludi (2010a) describes how at a CEMAT meeting in Lausanne in 1988 Dutch and French Ministers made the decision to shift their focus and activities to the European Community due to the lack of progress being made in terms of a European regional/spatial planning strategy. This resulted in an intra-European Union process of co-operation on spatial development that later produced the ESDP and kicked off a prolonged process of European Union collaboration in territorial development issues. The strongly inter-governmental nature of the new process (with support from the European Union) and its focus on the provision of an abstract overall development

framework or vision in the form of the ESDP did not however stray too far from the traditional CEMAT approach. Inspired however by the relative success of the ESDP, intra-European Union collaborative action in spatial development policy and territorial governance has subsequently progressed apace on a variety of fronts, which, as noted previously has to some extent seen the further marginalisation of CEMAT. This is obviously also a result of the EU's significant leverage in terms of funding and financial resources, resources which are simply not available in the CEMAT context.<sup>2</sup>

Again, as noted previously, post-ESDP activities in this area generally included stronger orientations towards aspects such as knowledge, mutual learning and evidence and have thus resulted in the development of, to use Adams *et al.*'s (2011) terminology, new 'knowledge arenas'. This includes, for instance, European territorial co-operation in the form of the INTERREG Community Initiative (see Faludi 2008; Stead & Waterhout 2008; Colomb 2007), the ESPON research programme and the Territorial Agenda of the European Union (BMVBS 2007a), which could already draw on ESPON findings. A revised version, entitled, "Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020" has been produced and recently agreed upon (May 2011) under the lead of the Hungarian EU Presidency (Hungarian Presidency 2011). A greater level of involvement in respect of the EU Commission in territorial governance is certainly evident in the EU's first ever macro-regional strategy in the form of the Baltic Sea Strategy, which has recently been emulated in the regional setting around the Danube region (CEC 2009; CEC 2010). The external dimension of co-operation between the EU and its neighbours, although not specifically targeted at spatial development, has also been strengthened through the launch of the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Strategic Partnership with the Russian Federation, which enable Russia and sixteen other EU neighbour countries to participate in territorial co-operation initiatives and projects with regions in the EU.

The shift towards intra-European Union initiatives and the concomitant reorientation of EU spatial development policy towards the utilisation of knowledge resources (evidence) raises the question of how CEMAT fits into this new setting and whether both can benefit while serving as knowledge arenas where these knowledge resources are utilised, tested and validated in the development of new or changed policy doctrines, particularly in a setting that includes the EU's external neighbourhood. In this context, it has of course to be borne in mind that EU initiatives, at least in the field of spatial development, are very much internally focussed and generally only pay lip service to the external dimension in respect of EU territorial development.

#### *Channels of Interaction*

A review of CEMAT's documents showed that the organisation is actively seeking to identify and reach out to intra-EU knowledge and policy arenas. In recent CEMAT documents the ESPON research programme and the Territorial Agenda process are identified as holding the most relevance for CEMAT activities. In the near future, moreover, territorial cohesion has the potential to become an increasingly integrationary

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<sup>2</sup> The financial resources available in an EU context are, for example, illustrated by the ESPON 2013 programme's total budget of 47 mil Euros, 75 per cent of which is provided by the European Regional Development Fund under Objective 3 for European Territorial Cooperation with the balance provided by the 31 participating countries.

element linking the EU's internal and external spheres of territorial governance. This justifies the need to take a closer look at the inter-relationship between CEMAT and European Union activities. It should however be stressed from the outset that interaction between the two spheres is, to a large extent, the result of and facilitated by the fact that the relevant activities in both CEMAT and the EU are often carried forward by the same relatively small group of people who jump between the different arenas. The territorial knowledge communities are thus not neatly separated, but overlap to a significant extent across the different arenas. The case of the Commission representative interviewed as part of this research, who was previously active in CEMAT activities, represents a good case in point here. As such, a country representative in CEMAT's Committee of Senior Officials may for example have been at one and the same time involved in the EU's Commission for Spatial Development (which drew up the ESDP), be a member of the Monitoring Committee of ESPON or be involved in the revision process of the Territorial Agenda. This facilitates a certain fluidity of ideas, data and argument between the different 'arenas of co-operation'.

Initially, the interplay between the ESDP process and CEMAT's Guiding Principles serves as an interesting historical case in point regarding the relationship between CEMAT and EU activities. The 1999 ESDP, prepared for the EU15 territory at the time, shares many similarities with CEMAT's Guiding Principles published approximately one year later; e.g. their inter-governmental nature. Both were intended to provide an overall policy framework and guidelines for implementing spatial development policy in their respective territory, although the Guiding Principles are, in terms of analysis and discussion, more limited in scope as compared to the ESDP (Jensen & Richardson 2004). According to Pallagst (2006: 262), the CEMAT document also received less political back-up as compared to the ESDP and "disappeared into European drawers". Stead & Waterhout (2008) describe how the ESDP served as a source of inspiration for CEMAT's Guiding Principles resulting in the sharing of both principles and terminology, which contributed to the extension of ESDP content and approaches towards a European 'continental' context. The ESDP itself dedicates a sub-chapter to the importance of the ESDP for pan-European and international co-operation and emphasises that the "policy aims and options of the ESDP should be taken into consideration as the basic contribution of the fifteen EU Member States to the Pan-European strategy for spatial development" (CEC 1999: 45). In this respect, the specific value of CEMAT can be seen in the fact that it extended ESDP thinking, which essentially is very inward-looking, across the external border of the EU. The phrasing in the above quote, however, invokes the image of a one-way street in terms of interaction, i.e. that the ESDP influences pan-European spatial development policy but is not vice-versa influenced in turn. It also has to be borne in mind that CEMAT's Guiding Principles, having been translated into several Eastern European languages, were influential in - and had a lasting impact on - planning legislation and doctrine reforms in Eastern Europe.

Most CEMAT documents stress the fact that CEMAT is the "only framework for pan-European co-operation on spatial development policies within which members and non-members of the European Union can gather on an equal footing at the level of Greater

Europe”<sup>3</sup> with this again being something that was repeatedly emphasised by the interviewees. CEMAT’s Resolution 1 from the Ministerial Conference in 2001 also states that “[w]e consider … the European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning and its committee to be a suitable political body to contribute to the co-ordination of common, Europe-wide territorial development goals and strategies” (CEMAT 2001: 1). Moreover, in the conclusions of a CEMAT seminar in Moscow in 2005, Günter Mudrich, First Secretary of the Chamber of Regions of the Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, calls for CEMAT to engage in the development of a:

“[...] *Transcontinental* territorial development concept. This project could define guidelines and territorial projections for closer interrelating territories of Eastern and Central Russia to the industrial and urban centres of Western and Central Europe” (Council of Europe 2005: 124, emphasis added).

CEMAT could, thus, provide significant added value by broadening the European Union dimension to include a continental, pan-European one thus lowering barriers between internal and external spheres of territorial development, if coordinative mechanism between CEMAT and EU activities were strengthened.

As noted previously, the ESDP process was effectively continued in the context of the Territorial Agenda, to which CEMAT documents frequently refer. In fact, Resolution No. 3 adopted during the 14th CEMAT ministerial conference focuses entirely on the Territorial Agenda of the European Union and its relation to CEMAT. The thinking behind the Territorial Agenda also appeared to be based, at least in its wording, on a more mutual footing as regards potential reciprocal interaction. The Territorial Agenda acknowledges the importance of the Guiding Principles and stresses that “we also want to intensify the dialogue with the neighbouring countries adjoining the EU” (BMVBS 2007a: 4, emphasis added). However, the newest instalment, the Territorial Agenda 2020, appears to have regressed somewhat as regards the inclusion of the EU’s external neighbourhood. CEMAT is not mentioned at all while the external border and European Union neighbourhood are only briefly referred to.

Another area of potential synergy identified by CEMAT is the ESPON research programme. ESPON, the European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion, was launched in 2002 and is now in its second 6-year term running from 2007 to 2013. In CEMAT’s Work Programme for the years 2007-2010 (CEMAT 2008: 10), significant overlap “between CEMAT’s thematic priorities for 2007-2009 and ESPON thematic priorities for the period 2007-2013” is identified. The working mechanisms of both organisations however remain quite different as ESPON is mainly concerned with the production of evidence and knowledge on European territorial structures while CEMAT represents a knowledge arena in which this evidence could be debated, utilised and validated. This is also highlighted in CEMAT’s Work Programme, which states that “while ESPON carries out mainly research activities, CEMAT organises

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<sup>3</sup> CEMAT Presentation, Available from: [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/heritage/cemat/AbouttheCEMAT\\_Presentation\\_en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/heritage/cemat/AbouttheCEMAT_Presentation_en.pdf) [accessed January 2012]

mainly debates through the organisation of seminars, symposiums and conferences” (*ibid.*: 10). Thus, increased co-operation between two spheres of action would provide CEMAT with evidence on territorial development in Europe and, in turn, would provide ESPON with a direct link to policy-makers and practitioners from all over the European continent. One complicating factor here is however that the evidence produced by ESPON does not generally include reference to those territories outside the so-called ESPON space (EU27 + Iceland, Lichtenstein, Norway and Switzerland), although, compared to the results produced in the context of the first round, the wider European dimension has increased in importance in the ESPON 2013 Programme as some projects aim to extend their analyses across the external borders of the European Union. Moreover, the ESPON Database Project is currently starting to collect map geometries and basic socio-economic indicators for the EU neighbourhood including Russia. Nevertheless, Russia and indeed other important neighbouring territories still generally appear as white spaces on the ubiquitous ESPON maps.

In terms of inter-organisational links, ESPON is widely referred to in many CEMAT documents. The ESPON 2013 programme document however only briefly mentions CEMAT as merely one example of the potential inherent in the extension of involvement and information to territories outside the ESPON space. In order to strengthen relations between the organisations, CEMAT officials attended an ESPON 2013 Programme Open Seminar in June 2008 in order to lay the foundations for improved co-operation and networking as regards territorial evidence. It is also interesting to note that, in 2009, the Russian Chair of CEMAT’s CSO saw the need “to establish a Memorandum of Cooperation between the CoE/CEMAT and ESPON in order to provide substantial information and a basis to develop common policies” (CEMAT 2009: 8). To what extent co-operation between the two organisational spheres has evolved in practice since, however, is not entirely clear. In addition, CEMAT itself has sought to strengthen its own evidence-base on territorial development in Europe by commissioning a report, consisting of national reports and a synthesis, on current territorial challenges and the evolution of national policy responses (CEMAT 2010a). This reflects the changes already undertaken in the approach adopted in the context of CEMAT’s Work Programme 2007-2010 (CEMAT 2008: 5) which emphasises that the

“main purpose of CEMAT is the generation and transfer of ideas. Inspired by research outputs and foresight studies, CEMAT identifies, confronts and compares concrete experiences out of the Member States, opening the door to transfers of know-how and of efficient solutions”.

This indicates how CEMAT increasingly identifies itself as a knowledge arena/channel and facilitator of knowledge transfer with a clearer focus on the utilisation of research and evidence. The above-mentioned synthesis report was prepared by Jacques Robert, a long-serving consultant who has been closely involved in CEMAT’s work since 1973 and who has also been active in ESPON. Unfortunately, the coverage of the synthesis report turned out to be everything but pan-European in nature, due to the fact that only 17 out of 47 member states provided a national report before the set deadline. This might again point to the presumption that CEMAT is on the wane in terms of seeing itself as an

important and valuable forum for spatial development co-operation.<sup>4</sup> The representation of Eastern European and non-European Union countries in the exercise was however relatively strong (for example including Armenia, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, FYROM, Poland, the Russian Federation, the Slovak Republic and the Ukraine).

The relatively new EU policy objective relating to territorial cohesion has also recently gained importance as a potential link between CEMAT and EU activities. Initially mentioned in an official EU context in the Amsterdam Treaty in 1997, the policy objective has, through its inclusion in the Lisbon Treaty, become a shared competence between the EU and the Member States alongside economic and social cohesion (Faludi 2009), although no universally accepted definition of what territorial cohesion is and what it exactly entails has yet been developed (Waterhout 2008; Eser 2009). References to territorial cohesion can be found in various CEMAT documents, for example already in the Guiding Principles, which has arguably been facilitated by the objective's commonalities with CEMAT's interest in 'essential services', which was also a key theme at the Moscow Ministerial, and the 'territorial dimension of human rights', which are both closely related to the objectives of territorial cohesion and its basic goals of balanced and harmonious territorial development. It is, however, interesting to note that CEMAT did not provide any official input into the consultation process around the European Commission's *Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion* (CEC 2008), and neither, less surprisingly, did the Russian Federation. Nevertheless, at the Moscow ministerial in 2010, Mr Piskorz – Head of Unit (urban development, territorial cohesion) at DG Regio – gave a presentation that dealt with the policy objective of territorial cohesion and the Commission's interpretation of it, which represents another example of how the seminars and conferences organised by CEMAT provide EU members and non-members alike with access to the debate and activities carried out within both arenas. This exchange is formally facilitated by the fact that the European Commission holds the role of a permanent observer at CEMAT Ministerial Conferences, although the Commission does not habitually utilise this right.

Before proceeding to the examination of Russia's CEMAT Presidency it is worth noting that Russia itself has also provided a forum for EU–non-EU interaction in spatial development outside the CEMAT framework. Both CEMAT and EU institutions involved in spatial development policy have participated jointly in the annual "All-Russia Forum on strategic planning in the regions and cities of Russia", which represents the most important Russian forum for the discussion of territorial development matters in Russia and beyond. In 2008, for example, representatives of CEMAT, the European Commission's DG REGIO, ESPON, the Assembly of European Regions (AER) and VASAB participated in the Forum in a roundtable on the 'European experience of regional development and strategic planning'. This exchange between the different knowledge arenas, this time in an external setting, again provided a forum for the diffusion of experiences, practices and debates from EU to non-EU countries, but also sensitised western European participants to the territorial challenges faced by Russia (for example the future of mono-industrial towns). In addition, CEMAT in general and the Russian Presidency in particular, which will be dealt with in more detail in the following

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<sup>4</sup> An additional 6 members provided national reports after the set deadline.

section, are identified as avenues for co-operation and for the exchange of experience in relation to spatial development issues in the Memorandum of Understanding for a dialogue in regional policy between Russia and the EU (CEC 2007). Paul Vandoren, then Acting Head of Delegation of the European Commission to Russia, was however to note, at the ‘All-Russia Forum on strategic planning’ in 2009, that despite creating a legal basis, the Memorandum had not yet led to any tangible outcomes.

## 6. CEMAT’s Going East: the Russian Presidency

The recent Russian Presidency represents an interesting aspect of non-EU involvement and agenda-setting in European co-operation on spatial development policy. After all, there are 20 European CoE members that do not have the privilege of access to those activities taking place within a European Union context. Via CEMAT, a non-EU country - in this case Russia - had the unique opportunity to participate and potentially shape the European debate on territorial development, giving non-EU Europe a voice in European spatial planning. The only non-EU country that has held the CEMAT Presidency before Russia was Slovenia (ending in 2003), which has since joined the European Union.

In co-operation with the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Russian Presidency was co-ordinated by the Ministry of Regional Development, which was only founded in 2004. The fact that of the four major non-ministerial conferences organised under the Russian initiative, three took place in Eastern European/non-EU countries,<sup>5</sup> provides some indication of a strengthened ‘eastern dimension’ as a result of the Russian Presidency. The Russian Federation also mobilised significant financial resources in organising CEMAT’s 15th Ministerial Conference. Although only seven Ministers from the CEMAT countries were present during the Moscow Ministerial, which appears to be the rule rather than the exception at CEMAT conferences, the status of the conference was elevated by the participation of the Council of Europe’s Secretary General Thorbjørn Jagland. Heading up the Presidency provided Russia with significant prestige and the opportunity to voice Russian concerns over the general trajectory of European territorial development, a debate from which the country is by and large otherwise excluded.

In addition to the wider political questions of exclusion and inclusion, Russia certainly also has a practical interest in spatial/regional planning policies and the mutual exchange of knowledge resources and experience with EU countries. In particular, there is a clear interest in strategies and international experience dealing with the territorial challenges that exist in the vast Russian territory, something which was mentioned previously in the Memorandum of Understanding between the Russian Federation and the European Union. According to an expert from the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, someone who has been closely involved in many aspects of EU-Russian co-operation on regional planning and policy:

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<sup>5</sup> These included: “Challenges and strategies for metropolises and metropolitan regions in a context of growing globalisation with regard to economic, social, environmental and cultural development” - Saint Petersburg, Russia 2008, “The spatial dimension of human rights: for a new culture of the territory” Yerevan, Armenia, 2008 and “A comprehensive approach to balanced sustainable spatial development of the European continent” Kyiv, Ukraine, 2009 (source: CEMAT 2010b).

“the international experience obtained by Russia through CEMAT is very important, as is the experience of Russia in territorial panning and regional development gained by the European countries, my European colleagues told me this many times.”<sup>6</sup>

In addition to the development of policy doctrines and frameworks, practical and action-oriented activities in terms of the exchange of knowledge and experiences are increasingly now being placed on CEMAT’s agenda. In fact, several interviewed members of CEMAT’s CSO criticised the relatively abstract level that CEMAT continues to work on and called for a more practical orientation including the direct exchange between planners, as well as study visits and joint publications. A practice-oriented example of bilateral co-operation in spatial development with Russian involvement under the CEMAT roof was the ‘CEMAT Model-Regions’–project. Being a reflection of German interest in both CEMAT as an international platform of spatial development co-operation and the Eastern dimension (including Russia) of European spatial development, the project was carried out by the German Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning (BBR) in co-operation with the German Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Development. The project was launched in 2001 with the initial aim of establishing local and regional co-operative structures in Leningrad and Moscow *oblasts* and overseeing the transfer of the necessary spatial planning ‘know-how’ and experience from German regions, particularly as regards participatory and decentralised planning (principle of subsidiarity). However, as Müller (2003: 423) stresses, the project was not conceived as a “one-way street” in a west-east direction, but also had the aim of enabling joint learning on both sides. The project continued until 2008 and was extended to include other Russian regions (Kaliningrad, Pskov, Kostroma and Nijni Novgorod) and countries such as Armenia, Georgia and the Ukraine. The regional focus of the project reflects German practice and institutional arrangements in spatial planning, in which the regional level (*Länder*) plays a strong role.

Returning to the Russian Presidency, a number of significant challenges had to be tackled during the three years, approximately, of the Presidency. Firstly, the high staff turnover in respect of the responsible persons at the Russian Ministry of Regional Development remained a constant problem, something which was, arguably, due to the Ministry’s comparative ‘newness’ in institutional terms. This undoubtedly inhibited continuity and impaired the progress of the work due to the need to re-acquaint the responsible contact person (who was exchanged three times over the course of Russia’s Presidency) at the Ministry of Regional Development with CEMAT’s organisational structures, activities and ‘ways of doing things’. The Russian Presidency also provided relatively little input for the contents of the Resolutions of the Conference, which was most likely a result of their unfamiliarity with the Western-dominated debate and concepts of European spatial planning. Indeed, Russia still lacks the shared epistemic experiences, traditions, concepts and, not least, language skills, which most of the current EU members have gained during the CEMAT, ESDP and Territorial Agenda processes as well as hands-on experience of transnational co-operation through INTERREG projects. This, however, is only to make a

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<sup>6</sup> Excerpt from an individual interview.

stronger case for integrating Russia more closely into European co-operation in spatial planning and territorial development and illustrates that Russian planning authorities and institutions have much to gain from continued co-operation and exchange with their Western European partners.

A second and more fundamental problem concerned the work and status of CEMAT within the Council of Europe. Probably as a side-effect of the current reforms underway at the Council of Europe, France announced shortly before the Moscow Ministerial that it would not be taking over the Presidency from Russia as previously planned. This was not a decision by the responsible French Ministry of Rural Areas and Spatial Planning or DATAR, but was part of a wider French initiative, led by French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, that aimed to influence the reform of the Council of Europe in the direction of a more exclusive focus on human rights and away from thematic, ministerial conferences such as CEMAT. The crisis for CEMAT manifested itself in the concrete situation that there was no member state willing to take over the Presidency from Russia. The situation was compounded by the CoE's discussion on allocations of financial resources as part of its structural reforms, which cast an additional shadow over CEMAT's work. These aspects also triggered discussion amongst the member state representatives about the purpose and indeed the ultimate *raison d'être* of their organisation and its continued existence. The immediate internal crisis was resolved by Greece's subsequent offer to assume the Presidency and ensured the continuation of activities. It had also emerged by this point in time that CEMAT's survival within the Council of Europe appeared to have been ensured, despite continuing discussions on the future of the ministerial conferences. In his opening speech in Moscow, Secretary General Thorbjørn Jagland rather ambiguously stated that: "Our work will have to be more streamlined and visible and respond to the current expectations of the member States. The specific contribution of specialised ministerial conferences will be considered in this context." There is little doubt then that a discontinuation of CEMAT would deprive non-EU Europe of an important access point to (Western) European spatial development policy.

## 7. Conclusions

The *Conference of Ministers Responsible for Spatial/Regional Planning* (CEMAT) represents an important permanent, multi-lateral forum that provides non-EU countries with a link to European Union spatial development policy-making, practice and research. Against the background of the recent increasing focus on knowledge and evidence in European Union spatial development policy and the fact that territorial knowledge channels across the external border of the European Union are comparatively weak, this paper's aim was to explore how CEMAT and its activities are connected/not connected to intra-European Union knowledge arenas in spatial development policy and territorial governance. CEMAT's high-level political nature, its rather abstract focus on policy doctrines/frameworks and lack of resources results in the fact that the organisation is rather weak in producing its own knowledge resources, particularly in terms of territorial evidence. Moreover, in terms of ideas and arguments, the recent shift towards European Union activities, and the resultant focus of EU Member countries on European Union

activities, has resulted in a situation where the inter-relationship between CEMAT and EU activities is increasingly characterised by a dominance of intra-European Union discourses and policy orientations. It does not therefore come as a surprise that CEMAT, as the above analysis has shown, is actively exploring new areas of potential co-operation with mainly intra-EU knowledge arenas such as ESPON. A, to some extent at least, ‘shared’ territorial knowledge community, where key actors are involved in both CEMAT and EU activities, is certainly advantageous in the context of this endeavour. Nevertheless, enthusiasm for co-operation appears to be much stronger in a CEMAT → EU direction than vice versa, which rather suggests the need for increased outreach in an EU → CEMAT direction. CEMAT’s relatively weak position in terms of the production of knowledge resources and evidence thus demands that a renewed effort be made to strengthen the level of co-operation between ESPON and CEMAT, something which thus far has been actively envisaged but simply not implemented in practice. CEMAT could, for example, take an active role in making ESPON findings more accessible to planners and practitioners through its seminars and symposia. In this context, and despite financial, political and geopolitical intricacies, the question of Russia (and its academia and epistemic communities) becoming part of the ‘ESPON space’ should potentially also be discussed.

In an external EU context, at this point in time, insufficient co-operation between CEMAT and EU activities or even the discontinuation of the CEMAT framework would, certainly hamper the involvement and integration of non-EU members in the debate on European spatial development policy and would, at least in the near future, virtually close the territorial knowledge channel between the EU and Russia as well as that with the rest of the EU neighbourhood, while also inhibiting the existing processes of learning on a pan-European level and stalling any possibility of moving towards the emergence of something that would resemble a pan-European ‘epistemic community’ in spatial development policy and planning. The Russian Presidency has shown that an appetite certainly remains in respect of spatial development policy, practice and research, particularly in practical action-orientated activities, and that the discontinuation of the CEMAT process would certainly result in the loss of an important access point for Russia. Contacts between the two spheres certainly exist, but institutionalised collaborative mechanisms and the systematic exchange of information are still lacking. The processes of co-operation and co-ordination linking the activities of CEMAT and the EU in this area undoubtedly however require that greater political attention is afforded to them by the actors involved in order that the increasing division between – to use Sakwa’s (2010) terminology – ‘Pan-Europe’ and ‘Official (EU)’ Europe is averted before it becomes insurmountable.

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