Finland – A Nordic Approach to Spatial Planning

Finland is a young nation state perceiving its membership of the European Union as presenting it with the opportunity of a fresh start. In order to understand why, it is necessary to be aware about Finnish history.

In 1809 Russia seized Finland from Sweden, making it an autonomous grand duchy. Thus the Finns were allowed to manage their economy and to look after education, but only on condition that they were no burden on the Imperial treasury. Finnish civil servants even had direct access to the Emperor.

In 1917 Finland gained its independence. It adopted a democratic constitution, but one that gave the President a strong position, especially in foreign affairs. The situation in Russia, which had been germane to Finland gaining its independence, was threatening, and the fear of intervention suggested a policy of economic self-sufficiency. Responding to the international situation, the dominant economic ideology became economic nationalism with strong elements of agrarian fundamentalism. (Poropudas 1998:43)

The Second World War brought the Finnish dilemma even more sharply into focus, Finland's economic policy after the war was to a large extent responding to pressure from the former Soviet Union. This influence was channelled via the unofficial national progress programme, written by President Kekkonen in 1956. In the face of the threat posed by the Soviet Union, the chief motive was that of creating a national consensus. (Poropudas 1998:44)

The collapse of the Soviet Union had immediate repercussions. Finnish export markets disappeared, sending the economy into a tail spin and pushing unemployment to around 20%. At the same time the end of the Cold War opened the "window of opportunities" (Baldersheim and Ståhlberg 1999:124) for re-establish contacts and markets in the Baltic Countries.

In 1995, after a majority of 57% had voted in favour, Finland became a member of the European Union and subsequently the only Nordic country to join the European Monetary Union. Tiilikainen (1996:130) underlines that the Finnish people have quickly adapted to their new European role and that most concerns regarding membership have disappeared form the political debate. In general, and especially as concerns international relations, Finland has been through a learning process, where new concepts and political thinking entered into domestic politics.

Finnish characteristics

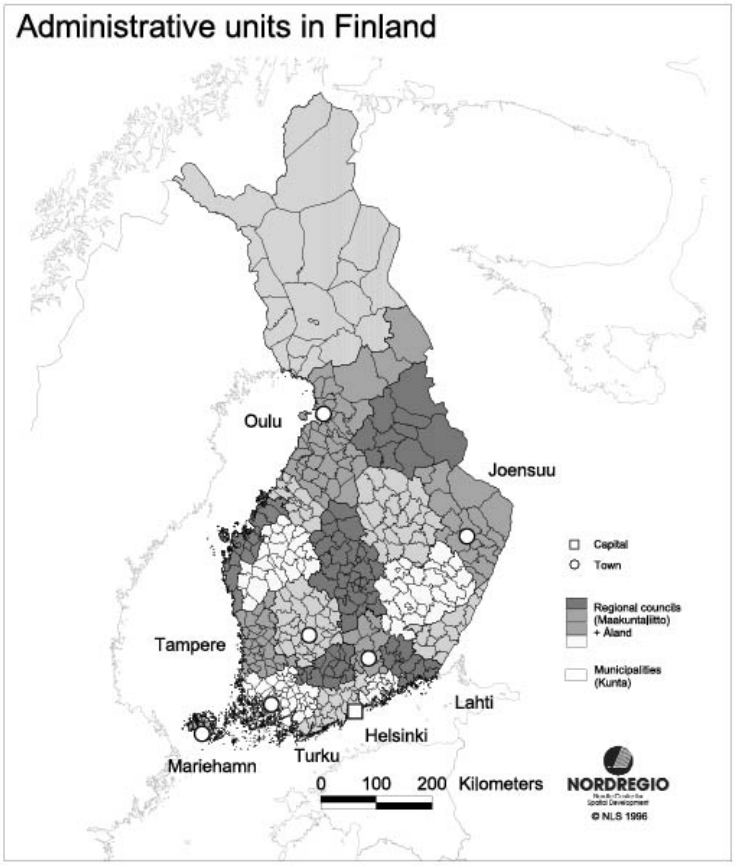
Finland is, with its 5.2 million inhabitants and 338,145 km^2, a sparsely populated country, with an average population density of 16 inhabitants per km^2. One-quarter of the country is north of the Arctic Circle, about 10 per cent of the total area consists of inland waters, with nearly 190,000 lakes, and about 76 per cent of the land area is covered by forests and woodland.

Indeed, Finland is said to be a country of evergreen forests. Forests have been Finland's most important natural resource for centuries. Pulp, paper and wood product industries represent over one-third of Finland's exports during the last decades. Only 8 per cent of the land area is used for agriculture.

Finland is also a country with thousands of lakes. Lakes and rivers have played an important role in the development of Finnish society. The largest urban centres and industrial settlement have grown up at river mouths, by the side of rapids and hydropower plants or close to waterways. In 1550, permanent settlements did not exist beyond the central Ostrobothnian coast and the southern part of the inland Lake District, and as late as the end of the 16th century, there were only 8 towns in Finland. The oldest town in Finland is Turku, dating from 1309.

Urbanisation, as measured by the proportion of population living in urban settlements started considerably late. Finland was a country of forests and farms with less than 10 per cent of the population residing in towns and commercial municipalities until the 1880s, when industrialisation began, which would continue until at least the 1950s. The manufacturing industry, however, never gained a dominant position in Finland's employment statistics, but there was a direct shift from agriculture's dominance to that of services. (Poropudas 1998:27)

Anyway, the regional distribution of the population has changed dramatically since World War II. In 1940 about half the population still lived in rural areas. The structural change in the Finnish economy and the increase in urbanisation of the 1950s and 1960s were rapid but late by European standard. The urbanisation trend has slowed considerably from the peak years of the 1960s. Today some 81 per cent of Finns are urban dwellers. It is noticeable that all of the 20th century was marked by growing concentration of population in the centres in southern and southwestern Finland, thus moving power of population distribution towards south. (Schulman and Kanninen 2000) The population is currently heavily concentrated in the south and southwest, 25 per cent of the population live in the county Uusimaa surrounding the metropolitan area of Helsinki, where population density is 131 inhabitants per km^2.



Map 6: Administrative Units in Finland

The Helsinki metropolitan area is home to roughly one-sixth of the country's total population: Helsinki has 555,000 inhabitants, Espoo, 213,000 and Vantaa 178,000. Other important cities are Tampere (pop. 195,000), Turku (pop. 177,000), and in the north Oulu, with 120,000 inhabitants.

Anyway, settlement patterns in Finland have a cultural dimension, too. Finland has been, since gaining independence in 1919, a parliamentary republic with two official languages: Finnish and Swedish. The Swedish-speaking minority constitutes about 6 per cent of the population, and lives mainly along the south and west coasts and on the Åland island. The Sami language is spoken by the 6,500 native people (Sami) in northernmost Finland, where it is an official language.

Nordic similarities strengthen the view that environmental and climatic conditions have had a decisive influence on the historical formation of the various national characteristics. In Finland, traditional cultural views towards nature are still very much alive. The emergence of national Finnish art and independence contributed very much to creating the national-romantic view of Finnish nature at the end of the 19th century, and vice versa. During the 20th century, the national romantic view has developed towards a "we live off the forest" ideology, based on the major role of the forests and the utilisation of forest resources in the Finnish economy and the influence of this sector on the country's politics. (Sairinen 2000)

The traditional views on Finnishness and its relationship with nature are nowadays in contrast to a more modern orientation on Finnish virtues. The Finns have been very eager to adopt modern lifestyles and technologies and to prioritise material and social welfare. This can make it somewhat difficult to define what Finnish culture stands for today:

> [It is] an appeal to the past of the Kalevala mythology, of the sauna, 'sisu' and Sibelius, or the assertion of Finland as modern, democratic, high-tech welfare state, the 'Japan of the North'? (Koivisto 1992:58)[48]

Another dimension of Finnish culture/tradition is a weak distinction between individualism and collectivism, which are not seen as mutually exclusive:

[48] Kalevala, the Finnish national epic, is a collection of folk poetry. This poetic song tradition, sung in an unusual, archaic trochaic tetrametre, had been part of the oral tradition among speakers of Balto-Finnic languages for two thousand years. In 1835, when the Kalevala appeared in print for the first time, Finland still had not reached independency. The Kalevala marked an important turning-point for Finnish-language culture because it bolstered the Finns' self-confidence and faith in the possibilities of a Finnish language and culture.

> The Finns do not ideologically contrast the state with individual responsibility, instead they believe that they complement each other. There is a widespread support for common responsibility. This attitude is probably intensified by the welfare state ideology that has deep roots in Finnish politics. (Sairinen 2000:101)

This aspect of Finnishness has to been seen in connection with the discussion on consensus-orientation and corporatism which became a fundamental element in Finnish policy-making after World War II. This forms the backdrop to the analysis of Finnish planning.

Ideas of governance and footprints of nation-building

Finnish spatial planning and development policy becomes more understandable when viewed in its context of traditions of administration and decision-making. Therefore, this sections will discuss some overall trends in these fields before we turn to recent developments in Finish planning. Special emphasis is given to aspects of central state administration and traditions of policy- and decision-making.

Central state administration

During the Russian period and throughout the first four decades of national independence, the administrative style of the Finnish state was based on the "ideology of rule of law" (Sairinen 2000:92). Since the 1960s, the ideology of the welfare state began to gain ascendancy as the prevalent administrative ideology in Finland. The role of public administration was gradually redirected from the restriction and control of rights to the distribution of benefits and services. Planning, development, information policy and research became gradually as important as legal regulation.

Planning became the main trend of public governing in the 1970s. However, it was for a long time primarily considered as a tool of administration and control; only as late as in the 1980s has planning gradually incorporated interaction between different actors, participation of citizens and impact assessment.

Following the economic crises of the welfare state ideology, a new dominating ideology of administration developed in the 1990s: managerialism. Generally speaking, it aims at the implementation of policy targets by optimal efficiency. An important concept here is profit responsibility. Managerialism has signified a triumph of rationality. The central questions of public governing became the reformation of management principles, partnership and client ideology regarding the relationship between the business sector and civil society, deregulation and the use of new, flexible policy instruments. In this respect,

managerialism can also be seen as a background factor of the regulatory reforms in spatial planning and development. (Sairinen 2000:93) According to Sairinen (2000) this shift from legalism to managerialism was accompanied by changes in the make-up of the profession. Whereas in the first decades after the Russian period legal experts, often jurists, were the main actors in the administration, administrative discourse seems to consider specialists with broad general education as ideal candidates today.

The importance of Finland's sovereignty can also be viewed in the administrative structure: In Finland, there is a bi-polar administrative structure characterised by a nation-building process combined with considerable local autonomy of municipalities. (Virkkala 1998) Nation and state are bound together by security concerns, a situation which has produced a strong national identity merging civil society and state.

> Civil society lives within the state. (Aalbu et al. 1999:68)

Aalbu et al. (1999) conclude that the nation-building project had determined the overall objectives for regional policy by integrating regions into the national project and by mobilising regional resources for national aims. Thus, Finnish nation building is a crucial factor, not just for policy-making, but also for administrative divisions.

Policy-making - a process of consensus-seeking and corporatism

In discussions of policy-making in Finland after World War II, three aspects have to be taken into account:

- Finland is a very small country, in terms of population, where various informal networks have been quite important. Generally speaking, in a small country the members of the elites know each other well, and the impulses and signals of action are produced by interactive communication.
- Feudal structures were never deeply rooted in Finland. The ownership of the natural resources – the soil and the forests – was distributed quite evenly, which also meant that the income flow generated by industrialisation was evenly spread among a large group of income-earners.
- Finland's neutrality is not only a doctrine of Finnish foreign policy, but had significant spill-over effects in other policy areas. (Sairinen 2000; Rehn 1996) Neutrality and the project of nation-building were of major importance for forming the ideological base on which the broad macro-consensus of post-war Finland was built in order to achieve both economic growth and peace.

Based on these facts, post-war policy-making can be characterised as a kind of social consensus-seeking. (Poropudas 1998; Joas 1997; Sairinen 2000; Rehn 1996) As a result of this, both interest organisations and traditional political parties have always played an important role in shaping public polices. Interest organisations have officially taken part in the policy formulation process on several occasions: 1) interest groups are represented on specific commissions preparing new legislation affecting varied interests; 2) interest groups receive commission reports for comments.

> The origins of Finnish corporatism date back to the corporation of 1939-44, when a social pact between labour and business was concluded. […] corporatism strengthened from the late 1970s until 1980s, but its failure to deliver in 1988, 1991 and 1994 again eroded its credibility. (Sairinen 2000:95)

In the beginning, the underlying principle was "growth corporation", which could be described as social consensus aimed at boosting Finland's economic growth. An important means of achieving that economic growth was the co-operation between economic, educational and political elites. (Poropudas 1998) Here, reference could be made to the Swedish economist Mancur Ohlsson who strongly influenced corporatism in Sweden by postulating that each party will gain more when all parties co-operate and extend the overall economic volume increase extend their own share by diminishing that of others.

For this kind of policy-making different labels have been found, some of which are consensus-seeking, corporatism, and neocorporatism. According to Rehn (1996) the case of Finland deviates in many ways from neocorporatist small states in Europe, as corporatism in Finland emerged only recently and is quite weak. Rehn argues that the concept of consensus is a more accurate definition of Finnish governance patterns than the comprehensive concept of corporatism. Other authors describe the Finnish situation as neocorporatist governance or an unsettled but gradually strengthening corporatism. (Sairinen 2000:95)

Examples of consensus-oriented policy-making can be found in various sectors. In economic policy, ensuring the price competitiveness of the forest industry and other export industries has been the fundamental doctrine which has prevailed over the macroeconomic concerns of domestic demand-management. (Sairinen 2000:94) The consensus model has also been an important basis of agricultural policy in Finland. From the 1950s to the beginning of EU membership, the prices of agricultural products were negotiated annually between the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and the Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest

Owners[49]. (Sairinen 2000:96) When implementing environmental laws, negotiations and consensus-seeking is also the central strategy. (Joas 1997:127)

However, during the most recent decades, Finnish politics have not always been consensus-based, there have been a number of serious disputes, disagreements and political crises. Nevertheless, the Finnish pattern of governance can be characterised by the pursuit of a national consensus in certain important areas of policy. (Sairinen 2000:94) In comparison to the Swedish approach to corporatism, one might imagine that Finnish consensus-orientation is not only rather young but also still influenced by the former style of "rule of law".

Development of the planning system

After having outlined some crucial aspects of the overall decision environment of Finnish spatial planning, in this section the focus is on spatial planning.

The 1990s have been full of action as regards the Finnish planning system. A number of reforms and a new building act as well as European influences reshaped the system. Therefore, this section will mainly concentrate on these recent developments and not as in the other country chapters discuss the historical development of the planning system. Concentrating on recent changes in the field, the ground will be prepared for the following discussion of the degree to which Finnish spatial planning is influenced by European developments.

Some general background information to start with: According to the Finnish constitution, adopted in 1919, the country is divided into provinces or counties, and into municipalities or communes. The municipalities are self-governing units whereas the counties are state agencies at the provincial level. Thus, Finland has had no proper self-government at a secondary level. (Ståhlberg and Oulasvirta 1996:88) A kind of functional equivalent to self-governing provinces can, however, be found. There are federations of municipalities which are fairly large. The number of such federations varies from a few to slightly more than 20 within different functional areas, whereas the number of counties has traditionally been 12, but has been reduced to 6 in 1997. In addition to the large federations of municipalities, there are also smaller once, so-called local federations of municipalities, mostly within the public health and social sector. Most of these local federations include only 2-5 municipalities, with a total population of 10,000 to 15,000.

[49] Maa- ja metsätaloustuottajain Keskusliitto, MTK

However, during the last decade both the administrative structure as well as planning and building legislation have been constantly changing, and the recent structures can only be understood as a result and in the light of these changes. There are also voices claiming that the process of reforming is not yet concluded, thus the Finnish planning system is still in flux.

In the following, the development of the Finnish planning systems will be discussed under three aspects, firstly the understanding of planning as land-use planning, secondly a number of administrative reforms shaping the formal planning system, and thirdly the new land use and building act.

Between architecture and spatial planning – sector-orientation in Finnish policy-making

Finnish planning tradition has its roots in architecture and is indirectly related to the struggle for nationhood. The autonomy of Finland as a Grand Duchy of the Russian Empire from the early eighteenth century and subsequent periods of repression around the turn of the century, paved the way for a nationalist awakening, which emphasised the symbolic role of national culture, in particular the Finnish language, art and architecture.

The predominant role of architecture was further strengthened during and immediately after Word War II, when architects led by Alvar Aalto took an active role in the reconstruction of urban and rural settlements. Thanks to the strong cultural and social tradition, the architectural profession managed to maintain its position in land-use planning during the rapid expansion of the field in the 1960s and 1970s, when Finland experienced an enormous growth of cities and urban and regional infrastructure, necessitating regional policy planning.

Regional planning emerged 1958 in Finland, when the regional land-use plan was finally established as an option for inter-municipal co-operation. This approach to bottom-up regional planning is still today characteristic for Finland. In 1968 the regional land-use plan was made obligatory in the Building Act. Regional planning councils[50] were entrusted with the preparation of the plans, which were subsequently ratified by the Ministry of the Interior. As time passed, various actors and authorities were established dealing with development and planning issues at regional level.

[50] The regional planning council (seutukaavalitto / regionplaneorgan) exist no longer. Today, regional planning lies with the regional council. However, it is important to keep in mind that the regional council and regional planning council are not identical.

The establishment of the Ministry of the Environment in 1983, as well as the addition of the concept of sustainability to the Building Act in 1990, are important milestones in the rise of the environmental strand of spatial planning. (Eskelinen et al. 2000) With the emergence of the Ministry of the Environment, environmental issues not only became an integral part of planning, the distinction between planning (understood as land-use planning) and development (understood as regional development) also became more clear-cut. Previously, both the functions of planning and development had been entrusted to the Ministry for the Interior, although treated by different departments.

Finally, the reform on the Regional Councils in 1994 (discussed in the next section), gave the start signal to a cross-sectoral approach to planning and development at least at regional level. At national level, however, the three policy fields of land-use planning, regional development and environmental policies are still separated. The Ministry of Environment is responsible for environmental policies and issued e.g. in 1995 the national environmental policy programme and in 1998 the government programme for sustainable development. Furthermore, the ministry is responsible for land-use regulation and got with the new land use and building act the instrument of national land use goals for setting out national interests in land-use. On the other hand the Ministry of Interior is responsible for regional policy which in Finland also comprises urban policies. One has, however, to keep in mind that Finnish urban policies take a regional development approach as they focus engines of regional development. Anyway, according to the Regional Development Act which came into force in 1994, the aim of regional policies is to promote the independent development of regions and a good regional balance. Thus, recent Finnish regional policy concentrates on regional expertise and development of competence in regions. The Centre of Expertise Programme is a clear step in that direction, as it seeks to pool local, regional and national resources to the development of selected internationally competitive fields of expertise. The latest Finnish regional policy instrument, the Regional Centre Development Programme, is heading in the same direction. It aims at balanced development by focusing on urban centres as engines of development, following the philosophy of strong regions requiring strong urban centres and strong centres requiring strong surrounding regions. (Lähteenmäki-Smith 2001)

All this may serve to illustrate that nationally there is a strong sector orientation dividing the various parts of spatial development policy into separated policy fields. However, Finland manages in the European debate to combine these aspects by bringing together the forces of both

Ministries when it comes to European activities such as the ESDP process or Interreg.

Wind of Change – Administrative structure in the 1990s

Local government developments in Finland have paralleled those in other Nordic countries: the implementation of the welfare state has mainly been a matter for the municipalities. This caused a rapid expansion of local government, especially at the level of joint municipal boards. This is due to the fact that these boards effectively serve as, and can be regarded as functional equivalents to, regional self-government in other Nordic countries. (Ståhlberg and Oulasvirta 1996:148) The expansion of local government has been mainly influenced by the state, as local government structure and processes have been heavily regulated by central authorities. Ståhlberg and Oulasvirta (1996:90) talk even about "the turbulent system of local government".

> The lack of a meso level of government has led to the formation of municipalities associations that perform functions for which individual municipalities are too small. (Baldersheim and Ståhlberg 1999:133)

The 1990s brought not only a deep depression but also a comprehensive reform of Finnish administration. The main purpose of the reform was the merging of various regional authorities in order to achieve a simpler and more homogenous regional administration. The main steps of the 1990s reforms were:

- 20 new Regional Councils, which in fact are amalgamated federations of municipalities, were established at regional level in 1994, in anticipation of EU membership. The Regional Councils are joint municipal authorities operating according to principles of local self-governance. They took over responsibility for regional development from the County Administrative Boards. They act as a centre of development for the region while at the same time providing an institutional framework for better integration of regional planning and development, the preparation of regional land-use plans, etc. This is the first time in Finland that spatial planning and development deliberately are grouped together under one regional authority.
- 13 new Regional Environment Centres took over tasks which formerly were treated by various authorities after a reform of the planning and environmental administration in 1995. Now, environmental issues are in the hands of the Regional Environment Centres. Five Regional Environmental Centres have been formed by

two or more counties, whereas the other counties have each their own.

- 15 new T&E Centres (employment and business development centre) were formed by merging six different authorities in 1997. T&E Centres are responsible for regional labour policies. Their tasks, as far as economic policy is concerned, are to support enterprises, give advice and promote technological development, export and internationalisation. Apart from a few exceptions T&E Centres follow the same regional division as the regional councils. In the Åland Islands there is no T&E Centre; here, the Regional council takes care of economic and environmental policy.
- A reform of the County Administrative Boards in 1997 reduced their number from twelve to six. Nowadays, the involvement of County Administrative Boards in spatial development is rather limited. They are primarily responsible for supporting welfare services at municipal level and for supervising municipalities.

So, the complexity of the administrative structure has been reduced. The reforms have also reduced the need for co-ordination at regional level. Regional divisions follow municipalities and, to a large extent, even the borders of the counties. The public services for health care and vocational education, however, have different regional divisions, which are also based on municipalities, as these responsibilities lie with joint municipal boards or associations of local authorities.

At local level there are ongoing discussions about merging smaller municipalities and city regions. The state offered financial incentives. The results up to now have, however, been poor. During the 1990s, the number of municipalities decreased slightly to a total of 448 in year 2001. In 1998 it were 452. The main obstacle to more extensive local co-operation is seen in the strong tradition of local autonomy.

In general, municipalities take care of most of the public service provision, such as housing, public transport, fresh water, sewage and waste disposal systems etc., including a large part of the administration of welfare services. All this had caused a rapid expansion of local governments. Expansion has been especially rapid at the level of joint municipal boards due to the fact that these boards can be seen as functional equivalents to regional self-government in other Nordic countries. In order to achieve better and more cost-efficient solutions, co-operation of neighbouring municipalities has become more and more frequent.

There are no major conflicts between differing administrative and functional regions. One major challenge, however, is administration and

planning in city regions where co-operation on common problems is needed. On the one hand, conflicts between the centre and neighbouring municipalities are common where the main part of jobs and services is located in the centre but the city loses tax-incomes as employees live in the neighbouring towns where they also pay their taxes[51]. On the other hand, the bigger cities are said to dominate development planning of the Regional Council, as they often have more political influence on decision-making.

Any attempt to describe present Finnish local government faces difficulties because of the numerous recent reforms. The most important of these are:

1. The free commune experiment, effective since 1989, increases local freedom from state supervision. The experiment can actually be seen as a provisional reform.
2. The reform of state grants strengthens the free commune experiment. This reform, effective since 1993, did away with spending-related special-purpose grants. These have been replaced by general grants based on objective calculations. The reforms also contain a number of deregulating measures in the state-local relationship.
3. A new Local Government Act was passed in 1995 and a partial revision of the former act came into force in 1993. The new Act can be characterised as an enabling act. It opens the way for more organisational freedom, including possibilities of delegating power and strengthening political and/or administrative leadership in the communes.
4. As a consequence of the general economic crisis of the 1990s, state and local public authorities have been looking for alternative solutions to publicly produced and publicly financed services. This general reorientation in a more market-oriented direction is starting to produce local experiments.

New Land Use and Building Act – enhancing local decision-making

A proposal for the new Land Use and Building Act was presented to Parliament in August 1998. It contained a total revision of the existing Building Act, which dates originally from 1958, although there have been numerous amendments since. The proposed legislation also included amendments to 23 other acts. The new act came into force on 1 January 2000. The overall goal is to promote sustainable community development and construction. Amendments guiding the *Natura 2000* compensations

[51] In Finland, income tax is levied by the municipalities as further described in the presentation of Finnish actors.

and the location of commercial premises with more than 2,000 m^2 had already entered into force on 1 March 1999. The control of the location of commercial centres, which generated a lively discussion during the preparation of the new act is a new topic in Finnish building legislation. Under the new building act, new commercial premises greater than 2,000 m^2 in size will receive a building permit only if the site is especially designated for that purpose in the town plan.

In general, a new planning culture is to be established, the idea being to encourage early participation in planning. Every project has to provide opportunities for inhabitants to participate, procedures for participation and assessment will be required in every planning project.

The land-use planning system continues to include the regional and municipal levels. National land-use goals are set by the Council of State. These goals may involve, e.g. main infrastructure networks or natural and built-up areas of national importance.

National and regional goals are expressed in regional plans, which are the only plans which must be submitted for approval. Preparation and approval of regional plans is the responsibility of 19 regional councils. Local decision-making is enhanced, as plans compiled by municipal authorities no longer need approval by higher authorities. Still, it has to be kept in mind that all "three" administrative tiers have a say in land-use, although the local level has been enhanced as regards actual land-use planning.

The Finnish spatial planning system: A product of European ambitions

After the foregoing spotlights on the current state of Finnish planning, we will now discuss European influences on the Finnish spatial planning system.

Following the general Nordic tradition, the Finnish administrative system has been characterised by a bi-polar structure, with its main actors at national and local levels, whereas governance structures at an intermediate level, notwithstanding the rearrangements made in the 1990s, are weak. In addition there is, as in most Nordic countries, a clear distinction between "planning" and "development", planning being understood as land-use planning.

As illustrated, in the 1980s and 1990s the planning system has undergone major transformations, opening the way for an increased doctrinal and institutional integration of spatial and environmental planning with local and regional development. EU membership has been an important factor in this; the establishment of the regional councils, for instance, is a reaction to the "Europe of Regions"-idea. In the light of the

latest changes and of the land use and building law which came into force in January 2000, Finland can serve as an example of the transformation of the Nordic planning tradition into spatial planning.

Because of the still relatively short period of existence of the new system, the traditional planning culture and tradition is still visible, nor can it be neglected as a force to be reckoned with:

> However, one can still sense cultural barriers between the interests and perspectives of land-use planning, environmental policy, and local and regional development, which are more related to the different professional and scientific backgrounds (architecture, biology/ecology, and economics/geography) of the relevant fields of expertise than to their institutional settings. Moreover, it is only very recently that architectural and environmental concerns, on the one hand, and economic concerns on the other, were seen as inherently inconsistent by many experts and politicians. (Eskelinen et al. 2000:43)

The Finnish eagerness to embrace European policy was evident even in the preparation of EU membership in the field of spatial development and planning including regional policy, environmental and land-use planning. In all three fields European integration has contributed to changes in Finland and to a merging of fields of competence which traditionally were strictly separated. (Eskelinen et al. 2000)

However, as Schmidt-Thomé (2001) points out, the European influence on these changes should not be overemphasised either. The gradual integration of the sectors admittedly has its roots partly in deepening European integration but not necessarily in spatial planning. Any attempt to try and distinguish in detail between changes due to *Zeitgeist* (overall trends) and influences arising from specific EU policies, can easily turn into a chicken-and-egg argument.

For a start, it can be useful to recall some characteristics of Finnish spatial planning, before discussing its Europeanisation:

- It promotes co-operation between municipalities.
- The cabinet has the right to lay down national land use goals when it comes to questions of international or national importance.
- Planning at regional level has two functions: to make national and regional goals more concrete, but also and in particular to mediate between national and local goals and to strengthen local co-operation.

Finnish Regional Policies meet the European Structural Funds

The most obvious EU influences can be found in the field of regional policy. Here the influence of the EU Structural Funds must be seen as a key factor.

While still only anticipating EU membership, Finland carried out a number of reforms of its administrative system. Harmonisation with the requirements for implementing Structural Fund regulations was regarded as of major importance. Thus, stronger regional institutions were established in the form of 20 Regional Councils, in 1994. (Aalbu et al. 1999, Eskelinen et al. 2000) These are bottom-up organisations with representatives elected by the municipalities. The Finnish regional councils are, in fact, amalgamated federations of municipalities. They act as regional development authorities, providing an institutional framework for better integration of regional development and strategic planning, as well as overseeing the preparation of regional land-use plans, etc.

In at least two respects, the establishment of Regional Councils reflects a major move towards the Europeanisation:

- It represents a step towards stronger regionalisation by creating a new, regional-level institution embedded in the municipal system (Aalbu et al. 1999:69). By means of this restructuring Finland moves closer to the philosophy of a "Europe of regions".
- Furthermore, this is for the first time in Finland that spatial planning and development have been deliberately placed together, in the hands of a single authority. In so doing, a base is provided for putting ESDP concepts into practice.

Another sign of EU influence on regional development policy is the fact that EU structural policy forms the main framework for regional policy in Finland (Aalbu et al. 1999:29).

Certainly, the importance of financial means can hardly be overestimated, as the influence of the EU Structural Funds illustrates clearly. Concerning the importance of sector policies, Ståhlberg and Oulasvirta (1996:114) have pointed out that the major steering instruments for the state vis-à-vis the municipalities are probably the sectoral planning systems. In the two-tier administrative system, the main responsibility for putting measures and plans into practice lies with the municipalities. As a result of EU membership and the "municipal-regional level" this is less obvious regarding regional development than in the field of planning.

Finnish regional planning goes spatial

There is no national spatial plan in Finland. The involvement of the national administrative level, apart from general legislation and policy statements, is restricted to the formulation of national policies and national land use goals. Those policy instruments have the character of advisory guidelines. However, Finland realised the importance of having a clear picture of national development in order to be able to present tenable arguments in the European debate and thus support the spatial positing of Finland. As Finland did not want to risk being without any means of influencing development which will affect Finland, the Ministry of the Environment has prepared strategic principles for national spatial development, *Finland 2017 – Spatial Structure and Land Use*, published in 1995. In preparing its spatial vision Finland looked both towards Europe and the anticipated EU membership, as well as the Baltic Sea Region and the VASAB 2010 ambitions. The report underlines that Finland needs a clear view of its future national trends. Otherwise the fear is one of being marginalized in the international debate, without means to influence development which affect Finland. (Ministry of the Environment 1995)

In this spirit, Finland tried to prepare for the upcoming ESDP debate, a debate centring on the, for Finland practically unknown, concept of spatial planning and development. Even now this concept has no translation into Finnish as it addresses issues which – as shown previously – have been traditionally treated separately in three policy fields: land-use planning, regional development policies and environmental policies.

Anyway, this document is a one-off affair, which is, however, followed up by the national land use goals. The new Land Use and Building Act, which came into force in 2000, specifies that the government shall prepare national land use goals for defining the national interests in terms of land-use. These are e.g. used of translating ESDP policy aims into national interests.

As a consequence of translating the ESDP aspects into national interests, the Finnish response to the ESDP outside the national government level (including the Association of Finnish Local Authorities) has been limited to say the least:

> Although the different EU programmes and Community Initiatives have, through a number of years of practice, now become familiar to the Finnish planners and (to a limited extent) to the public, European spatial planning initiatives, such as ESDP and CEMAT, remain rather unknown. Discussion or research on the issues has

> been limited. Only a certain interest in raising some Nordic concerns and increasing international awareness of them has been visible. (Schmidt-Thomé 2001:8)

In general, money talks, it would seem; the Structural Funds have influenced Finland much more than the ESDP. At the same time, the handling of Structural Funds Programming and especially the handling of the Community Initiative Interreg, also illustrates several Finnish characteristics in spatial policy making. The negotiations on the Interreg IIIB Baltic Sea co-operation, for example, illustrate the division of labour between the three national actors in spatial planning and development. Apart from the Ministries of the Environment and Interior, which officially are in charge of such issues, the Association of Finnish Local Authorities has a role extending well beyond that of a lobby or pressure group. This co-operation illustrates the statues quo of corporatist decision making and might be considered as a small policy community.

The structural and administrative changes mentioned earlier were certainly a response to substantial needs. As pointed out by several writers during the course of the ESDP discussion, there is a certain misfit between the spatial vision put forward by the ESDP and the geographical/spatial situation existing in the Nordic countries. (Böhme 1998, Schmidt-Thomé 2001)

A number of the basic principles of the ESDP, e.g. overcoming the dualism between town and countryside, are nonetheless reflected in ongoing discussions in Finland, as e.g. indicated by the government report on national land use goals. Under the heading of "Functioning settlement structure" it mentions urban-rural interaction as something to be pursued, but does not give this concept any concrete contents. A separate chapter of the report describes international co-operation in spatial planning and lists the ESDP aims. Here, the role of the national land use goals is seen more as a Finnish message to the European co-operation than introducing European principles in Finnish spatial planning. Nevertheless, being very general in nature, the goals may also work the other way.

The topic of rural-urban interaction and partnership is also of relevance to the Committee for Rural Policy, which serves as an inter-ministerial advisory group. The Committee, together with its counterpart in urban policy, has established a common working group. In the final report, the working group states that there is no reason to combine urban and rural policies, but there are common issues which need to be brought together. Thus the aim is to introduce the principles and practises of urban-rural interaction as essential components of both urban and rural

policies. (Ministry of the Interior 2001) Despite the weak political understanding of the need for doing so, the conclusions of the working group can mark the beginning of a separate conscious interaction policy in Finnish spatial planning (Schmidt-Thomé 2001).

As rural-urban partnership is, according to the ESDP, among others a regional task, and as the Finnish regional level has been re-organised not least in order to fit the EU pattern better, the implementation of rural-urban partnership at regional level is of interest.

In Finland this concerns mainly the regional councils, the arena where the different strands of spatial planning meet and where both rural and urban authorities and interests are represented. The key task of the regional councils is the creation of a development strategy of the region. The councils take care of planning regional policy, regional planning and general development of planning for the region. The emphasis in planning and other regional development is on visions and strategic issues. The regional plan consists of a general plan for the use of areas for different purposes which steers the planning of local authorities and other land-use planning.

There is as yet precious little evidence of rural-urban interaction policy, as the Regional Councils are still in the process of developing their planning function. Some (e.g. Häme, South Ostrobothnia) have, however, included the principle of interaction in their regional development programmes, just as they have included many other slogans, but this has little to do with interaction policy. (Schmidt-Thomé 2001)

The regional tier is the level in Finland where the ESDP philosophy actually can be implemented, as only here all spatial development and planning tasks lie with the same actor. But there seems to be little concern with and knowledge of the ESDP. So, the ESDP is actually handled at national level, by ministries pro-actively taking part in the international debate. There are certainly top-down processes where ministries influence lower tiers and perhaps promote much more of the EU spatial planning policy than one might guess. The simple fact that the regional councils have been accorded competence and tools for spatial planning according to the ESDP, might help to do more than simply paying lip service to ESDP phrases. There is a lot of top-down steering in the way the lower tier is empowered.

Finnish environmental action – a young policy field pushed forward by EU membership

Prior to and as a result of EU membership, much of the Finnish environmental legislation has been harmonised with EU legislation. (OECD 1997) The harmonisation with EU regulations has, however, certain limits which were manifest during the membership negations. Finland was granted certain exemptions from EU environmental legislation wherever Finnish regulations are more stringent. The conditions of accession allowed Finland to maintain its own standards for up to four years, on the assumption that the EU would, during that time, come closer to Finnish standards.

> On the other hand, it is evident that the membership in the Union has given rise to severe pressure towards Finnish environmental policy. It is possible that the adoption of the EIA Act, integrated pollution control, and many new activities in the areas of nature protection and agricultural pollution would not have been politically feasible without pressure from the EU. (Sairinen 2000:120)

At the beginning of the 1980s, EIA was still unsuitable for the rather young environmental policy system in Finland. Thus, placing EIA on the policy agenda took an entire decade. The Finnish parliament enacted EIA legislation in 1994, one year before the Finnish EU membership. Finland was one of the last countries in Europe to do so.

Regarding the adoption of Natura 2000, Sairinen points out that this became a never-ending nightmare:

> The first proposal received over 14,000 complaints. After long and thorough treatment in the ministerial working group, the governmental decision concerning the programme was made in August 1998. After that the Finnish Natura proposal was submitted to the EU Commission in December 1998. The Commission complained that the proposal has some shortcomings. […] In the Natura case, the Finnish environmental administration made some serious mistakes in the preparation and hearing stage. Because of the pressure from EU, the ME [Ministry of the Environment, Finland] precipitated the preparations, and had insufficient time for proper preparation. (Sairinen 2000:134)

In the case of habitat and urban wastewater directives, Finland faced difficulties in meeting the deadlines. (OECD 1997:29) These difficulties have served to weaken the picture of Finland as a forerunner in environmental policy, whereas the relatively recent institutional

consolidation of domestic environmental policies in Finland has to be taken into consideration.

All this might also explain why Finland did not live up to the expectation that it as new EU Member State would give significant impetus to the environmental policy of the Union (see also the section on Finnish ambitions to customise the EU).

However, despite these struggles in what is a relatively young field of policy, progress has been made in linking environmental policies to spatial planning. Here, it is worth recalling that the Ministry of the Environment is a rather young ministry. In 1983 new environmental policy was firmly entrenched with the fusion of land-use planning and environmental protection into the new Ministry of the Environment. (Eskelinen et al. 2000:46) Previously land-use planning was handled by the Ministry of the Interior. This fact might contribute to the present close co-operation of both ministries regarding spatial planning.

Europeanisation of Finnish planning

The main actors in spatial development and planning are the central state, through its regional offices, and the Regional Councils, which are indirectly elected by the municipalities. Only regarding physical (land-use) planning are the municipalities the main actors.

An attempt to discern the European Union's influences on Finland reveals that alterations in the organisation, competence and empowerment of the regional level are the most obvious changes in Finland, apart from debates on substantive issues.

As already discussed, at regional level (cf. also annex), Finland diverges from its Scandinavian neighbours because of the absence of an autonomous self-governing regional level (with Iceland as an exception). Municipal autonomy is extensive and there is a tradition of municipalities joining together and forming various co-operation regions for different tasks. There are approximately 270 so-called restricted joint municipal boards fulfilling almost the same functions as those of regional self-governance in other Nordic countries. (Mäki-Lohiluoma 1999:72)

The Regional Council is now the main actor in the field of spatial planning and development at regional level. On the basis of a mandate given to it by the state, the Regional Council is active as an authority:

- for regional development, according to the Regional Development Act, and
- for projects financed under the Structural Funds.

The striking fact is that, even though its engagement in this field is statutory, it is based on municipal co-operation. This statutory joint municipal action is, furthermore, directed towards both regional planning

and development. According to the law, the planning authority is to operate as a regional development authority.

Entrusting both spatial development and planning to a single actor, combined with a statutory, bottom-up approach reflects an attempt to mediate between the Nordic strong municipalities and the European demand for stronger regions, while at the same time attempting to combine spatial planning and development.

As has already been argued, the Regional Council is in at least two aspects influenced by Finland's EU membership:

- the establishment of regional self-government
- integration of regional development and land-use planning as an answer to the European idea of spatial planning.

The implementation of EU spatial development and planning policy in Finland has a focus on the regional level, both regarding the state interventions/activities and implementation. Here, the main influences of Europeanisation can be viewed. At the national level, however, there are some interesting insights to be gained from examining the interaction between Helsinki and Brussels.

Finnish ambitions to customise European spatial policies

Having discussed the European influences on Finnish spatial planning, we will now turn to the Finnish influences on European spatial development policy. Talking about Finnish influences on Europe, the term "Finlandisation"[52] comes to ones mind, although it was a concept of more immediate interest during in the 1960s than it is today.

Under the precarious post-war position of neutral Finland, the danger of "Finlandisation" spreading was perceived by the US, when Finnish president Uhro Kekkonen first proposed the Helsinki meeting in 1960.[53] (Delamaide 1995:43) Certainly, Finland's post-war position, located between East and West, as well as having both a lengthy border with Russia and a "Russian history", was a difficult one. However, we should remember that it was through the Helsinki process that 33 countries officially ended World War II by finally recognising post-war borders in Europe.

[52] Finlandisation is a term of the cold war, marked by the USA's fear of more "Western " European countries looking for contacts with the USSR in attitude comparable to the one of Finland.

[53] Finland was an auxiliary member of the Warsaw Pact and had a special defence agreement with the USSR: Under the leadership of Paasikivi and Kekkonen, relations with the Soviet Union were stabilized by a consistently friendly policy on the part of Finland. A concrete expression of the new foreign policy-designated the Paasikivi-Kekkonen line--was the Agreement of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance concluded between Finland and the Soviet Union in 1948 and extended in 1955, 1970, and 1983. The agreement included a mutual defence provision. (Britannica)

Finland's position, situated between both blocs and staying in contact with both sides without taking clear position in support of either one or the other, has been a prominent question in geopolitics ever since World War II. Not even after the end of the Cold War and Finland's EU membership have speculations about "Finlandisation" stopped. Certainly, Finland is keen on becoming a well-integrated member of the Union, but at the same time has managed to make its being a neighbour to Russia a topic of concern to the EU.

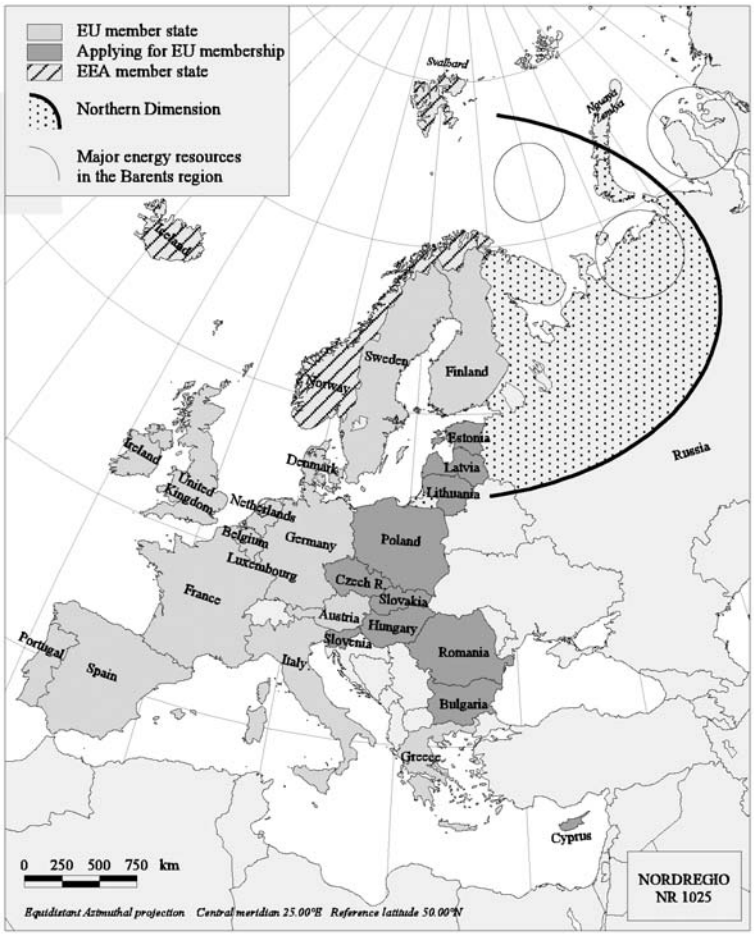
Lindström (2000:21) points out that studies of development within the EU have demonstrated that new members tend to underline their special priorities in such a way as to cause the Union to change its policies in a manner commensurate with that Member State's own need. Regarding Finland, there are authors who claim that "Finlandisation" of the EU has been part of the intention behind the *Northern Dimension*. (Lindström 2000, Ojanen 1999, Joenniemi 1998) Ojanen (1999) labelled the development and adoption of this European Union policy born-in-Finland, a "customising" of the European Union or "making the Union more Finnish".

> Clearly, Finland's political class has seized the historic opportunity of a more democratic Russia combined with Finland's own newly gained position at the political centre of the European Union to pave the way for greater de facto interdependency between Russia and the rest of Europe. (Hedegaard and Lindström 1999:7)

Finland has stressed the idea of a Northern Dimension in the EU from the very beginning of its membership negotiations. The dimension is, firstly, a geographical fact. Secondly, it promotes some specifically Nordic values, such as environmental consciousness, transparency in public administration, and social welfare. Thirdly, it also focuses on the climate with particular emphasis on the specifics of agriculture in Finland. (Ojanen 1999:13)

Regarding the success of this latest "Finlandisation" approach Hedegaard and Lindström write:

> In view of these rather modest results, it may be argued that the success of the Northern Dimension initiative lies elsewhere. The fact that the concept of 'northernness' and a Northern Dimension to EU policies have gained entry to the Union's documents can be interpreted as signalling an end to the sense of isolation, remoteness and exceptionalism that used to permeate the North. The relationship between North and South in Europe is no longer exclusively on the 'the South talking and the North listening' (Joenniemi 1998). On the contrary, over the longer term, the



Map 7: The Northern Dimension

> Northern Dimension initative will undoubtedly carry with it the implication demand that Europe pay serious attention to the challenges and aspirations of high North – not because it is northern but because it is European. (Hedegaard and Lindström 1999:12)

The *Northern Dimension* was launched before the Finnish EU presidency began in the second half of 1999. This presidency provided Finland with another opportunity to influence EU policies. Apart from this combination of spatial policies and geo-politics, Finland has also been active in the field of spatial development policies.

The preceding German presidency managed to finalise the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP). The Finns had to look for new challenges and to maintain the ESDP-momentum by formulating an ESDP Action Programme aimed at the application of the ESDP document.[54] In addition there was the Urban Initiative III. Did the Finnish presidency succeed in giving those spatial approaches a Finnish touch?

The ESDP task of the Finnish Presidency was to maintain the momentum of by developing an Action Programme and starting a discussion on forms of future co-operation on spatial development and planning on a European scale. The Action Programme turned out to be a very "ambitious list of wishes", where every country put down what it would like to do. Only time will tell what the actual results of all this will be.

As far as Finnish touches are concerned, the Finns also emphasised launching a discussion on future co-operation and the Urban Exchange Initiative III. At the informal meeting of the ministers responsible for spatial planning and urban/regional policy of the European Union, held in Tampere in October 1999, Finland presented the third document of the Urban Exchange Initiative. The Initiative aims at the exchange of experience between EU Member States in the field of urban development. The themes of the preceding two reports and topics for exchanges of experiences were chosen by the Presidency. In line with this tradition, Finland chose two topics, which are important to Finnish urban policy. The first theme, "An expertise-based approach towards the economic development of urban regions", had been selected in order to introduce the idea of development based on local strengths and expertise into the European debate on urban policy. As strategies often tend to focus on existing problems, the opportunities provided by building upon strengths

[54] Under the French presidency (second half of year 2000) discussions on dissolving/setting aside the CSD became more intense. In these discussions Finland proposed transferring the ESDP Action Programme to the Committee on Regional Development in order to keep the idea alive.

can often be overlooked. The second theme " Urban research and information systems" had been selected in order to promote interaction between urban research and urban policymaking. (Ministry of the Interior 1999) At the meeting in Tampere it was decided that the EU Member States would begin new co-operation in the field of urban policy, as a continuation of the Urban Exchange Initiative which was an informal exchange of experiences. Hitherto European co-operation in the field of urban policy focused mainly on tasks directed towards socially oriented metropolitan policy. The new co-operation is to deal with the question of how best to promote an integrated urban development approach in national policies and Structural Funds programming. Finland thus clearly tried to initiate a trend change in European urban policy co-operation by leaving the field of social policies and heading towards the Finnish areas of interest, especially promoting "expertise-based urban development" (Schulman 2000), i.e. urban development related to innovation, and thus viewing urban policy in the context of regional development.

As a Nordic country, Finland also has the image of a country with a high degree of environmental concerns, and has often been described as an active agent in the field of international environmental policy. According to the OECD review (1997), Finland has actively supported the development of international environmental laws and agreements. It has also developed an elaborate network of co-operative regional activities to promote sustainable development and combat trans-border pollution.

In consequence, a significant boost to the environmental policy of the Union was widely expected when Finland and Sweden joint the EU. (Andersen and Liefferink 1997) Especially the front runners in EU environmental matters, i.e. Germany, the Netherlands and Denmark, expected the new members to support a higher level of environmental protection in the Union. However, even though Rusca (1998) points out that Finland was promoting environmental aspects in the ESDP, there was no "Finlandisation" of its environmental policies:

> Although Finland has nearly always been on the same lines with the other Nordic countries in matters of international environmental policy, specifically Finnish initiatives or proposals that would have set the agenda for international policy making have been hard to identify. (Sairinen 2000)

The lack of a distinct Finnish profile in European environmental policy might be explained by a number of factors as

- the relatively recent institutional consolidation of domestic environmental policies,

- the short time Finland had been member of the Union when e.g. the study of Andersen and Liefferink (1997) was carried out, and
- the high priority of policy topics related to the border with Russia, such as the Northern Dimension.

When it comes to influencing EU polices, Andersen and Liefferink (1997:24) might be right that Finland has had a rather modest record and there might be several reasons for this, but Finland has had a strong function as an innovator in its neighbouring areas. Here, an example is the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM)[55] which according to Joas (1997:144) is the pride and joy of the Finnish government in environmental co-operation. HELCOM is an intergovernmental body which monitors the development of the marine environment in the Baltic Sea Region and unanimously adopts recommendations for protection and preservation which the governments of the Contracting Parties shall reflect in their national systems. Furthermore it works on the implementation of the Baltic Sea Joint Comprehensive Environmental Action Programme (JCP) approved in 1992 and updated in 1998. It focuses on investment activities for point- and non-point pollution sources and on planning and investment activities related to management programmes for coastal lagoons and wetlands.

However, considering the size of the country, Finland has influenced EU policies quite successfully, especially through the Northern Dimension. So Lindström (2000:21) is right in stating that new Member States tend to underline their special priorities in such a way as to cause the Union to change its policies in a manner commensurate with that Member State's own need.

An alternative interpretation would be to say that the Finns simply followed Hans Magnus Enzensberger's advice to be more eccentric, and turned the tables on their opposite numbers by claiming that the country's position, far from being a drawback, is in fact an enviable one. It can be an advantage to live on the periphery and to question the values of the centre, so that instead of playing the game according to the rules of the Big League Boys one could come to understand that to be small and far

[55] HELCOM is an intergovernmental body bringing together the contracting parties of the Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area are. These partners are Ministries of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Sweden and the DG ENV from the European Commission. Though the Contracting Parties are normally represented by their ministries for the environment as the aims and tasks of HELCOM lie within their responsibility we do not only need their good will and endeavours, but the commitment of the Governments of the Contracting Parties as a whole. That becomes very obvious by the fact that many aspects concerning the protection of the marine environment are dealt with by other ministries, such as transport, agriculture, energy, chemical policies, spatial planning and development.

away from the mainstream is not only beautiful, but also an intelligent option. (Enzensberger 1990)

Summary and conclusions

Finland is perhaps the only Nordic country which could be described by Enzensberger's (1990) idea of Nordic eccentricity. Evidence for this can be found not at least in the concept of "Finlandisation". As has been pointed out, Finland has endeavoured to give Europe a Finnish or perhaps rather a Nordic touch.

From nation building to European ambitions

An outstanding example of recent "Finlandisation" is this rare combination of spatial development policies and geo-politics which is mainly directed at the superior and less to the subordinate levels: the Northern Dimension, prepared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Today, the Northern Dimension is a European Union Policy, born in Finland.

Anyway, when discussing Finnish spatial development policies it has to be kept in mind that the 1917 gained independence, neutrality and the project of nation building were of major importance for forming the ideological base of Finnish policy-making tradition. A tradition characterised by the importance of informal networks and consensus oriented decision making. In addition, the considerable autonomy of municipalities characterises the bi-polar administrative structure. The lack of an intermediate level of government led to the formation of municipal associations performing functions for which individual municipalities are too small. To these functions belong e.g. regional planning and regional development.

All this forms part of the Finnish spatial policy environment which still is characterised by a sector orientation, where planning is clearly rooted in the field of architecture and separated from environmental and regional development policies. Interestingly, urban policies are understood as a part of regional policies and strongly related to innovation policies.

The idea of an expertise-based urban policies approach, aiming towards economic development in urban regions, was a cornerstone in the Finnish contribution to the European debate on urban policies, namely the Urban Exchange Initative III, presented during the Finnish EU Presidency in 1999. Another milestone reached during this presidency was the ESDP Action Programme. As the preceding German Presidency had had the honour of presenting the final ESDP document, the Finns were eager to maintain momentum in the ESDP process, which they

managed to do with help of the Action Programme. Thus Finns made an attempt to customise European spatial policy during their EU Presidency.

To what degree Finland influenced Europe in those two fields is hard to estimate. The geopolitical effect of a Northern Dimension is, however, hardly likely to be repeated in the field of spatial planning.

A Nordic approach to spatial planning

Finns are, however, not only working on giving Europe a more Finnish or Northern touch, they are at the same time heavily concerned about adopting European policies and making Finland more European. Adopting the euro is one example. Coming to terms with and even promoting the EU approach to spatial planning is another.

In the field of spatial development policies two major aspects of Europeanisation can be viewed in Finland, one concerning the regional level and the other one concerning spatial planning in general.

One sign of EU influence on Finnish regional development policy is the fact that EU structural policy forms the main framework for regional policy in Finland. Thus national regional policy measures are today only a small part of regional policy in Finland. Furthmore, even at the time when they were only anticipating EU membership, stronger regional institutions were established, with a view to the need to adapt to EU Structural Funds regulations. Thus 20 new Regional Councils were established in 1994. These amalgamated federations of municipalities took over the responsibility for regional development from the County Administrative Boards.

In addition to regional development, the Regional Councils are also responsible for regional planning. This step towards overcoming the traditional division between the planning and the development sector is the first clear indication of the emergence of spatial planning in Finland.

The development at regional level is, however, not mirrored at national level. Here spatial development policies or spatial planning tasks lie partly with the Ministry of Interior and partly with the Ministry of the Environment. As regards the ESDP process and Finnish national participation in Interreg, especially IIC, IIIB and IIIC, the ministries co-operate extensively. The participation of the Association of Finnish Local Authorities, illustrates the bi-polar administrative structure and the corporatist tradition. The latter-named is especially important where the association, in the case of conflicts, acts as mediator between the ministries.

Despite this broad national participation in the ESDP process and the fact the Finnish planners have now become familiar with EU programmes, European spatial planning initiatives, such as the ESDP and

especially its content are relatively little known. One reason for this may be the fact that the ESDP is handled at national level and aspects considered as being of relevance for Finland as a whole are integrated or translated into Finnish national policies.

For instance, in 2000, the new land use and building act introduced national land-use goals, which has e.g. been used for applying the ESDP.

Prior to this instrument, and anticipating the ESDP process as well as the VASAB 2010 work, the national vision "Finland 2017" had been prepared. The Ministry of the Environment (1995) presented this document as a foundation on which Finland could put forward tenable arguments in the international debate, regarding both Finnish needs and future national trends. The kind of reasoning advanced when arguing for the need of a Finnish spatial vision is not merel rhetoric. Fear of being left in the margins of international debates makes Finland take an active role.

Finland – Eager for European integration

In general, Finland has a pro-active attitude towards European integration and is – at least in a Nordic perspective – eager to influence the European agenda. The Northern Dimension is probably the most striking example, but not the only one. Regarding spatial planning Finland also tried to influence the European agenda by preparing e.g. the ESDP Action Programme and the Urban Exchange Initiative III. In the journal on Nordic co-operation, *POLITIK I NORDEN*, published by the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers, Norrbom (1999) stated that Finland's EU work has been the best in Norden.

Working in both directions at the same time, the Finns are trying to facilitate a meeting of their system and the European one. The Finnish eagerness for European integration can undoubtedly be partly explained by the country's geo-political history. Even today the Finnish perspective is not limited to Western Europe and the EU. The Northern Dimension policy illustrates well Finland's consciousness of its geographical position.

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Nordic co-operation
takes place among the countries of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, as well as the autonomous territories of the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland.

The Nordic Council
is a forum for co-operation between the Nordic parliaments and governments. The Council consists of 87 parliamentarians from the Nordic countries. The Nordic Council takes policy initiatives and monitors Nordic co-operation. Founded in 1952.

The Nordic Council of Ministers
is a forum for co-operation between the Nordic governments. The Nordic Council of Ministers implements Nordic co-operation. The prime ministers have the overall responsibility. Its activities are co-ordinated by the Nordic ministers for co-operation, the Nordic Committee for co-operation and portfolio ministers. Founded in 1971.

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