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Meanings for Spatial/Geographical Visions

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1. Introduction

This paper outlines a research approach towards the study of spatial visions as planning instruments in contemporary strategic planning. The importance of spatial visions has steadily increased during the last two decades. However, spatial visions are still today not very well researched within the academic world. The research that exists, focus either on the practical use of visions in strategic planning, or on a critical reading of spatial visions, its power implications and so on. The research approach argue that these two approaches have to be combined in order to be able to create a fuller understanding of spatial visions role and importance in planning, especially strategic planning, today. The first section of the paper present and discuss the forms and contents of spatial vision, its aims and scales, and the methodology of spatial visions. In the second section we attempts to lay out a way towards a wider analytical understanding of spatial visions through a discussion of its part as a planning instrument, its external and internal functions in order to arrive at a fuller, more analytical definition of spatial visions. In the third and conclusive part we tentatively discuss three important conditions of spatial visions that seems crucial to investigate further in order to reach a better understanding of spatial visions. First we discuss its values and ideas, secondly its possibilities to produce expected effects and thirdly if spatial visions are legitimate from a scientific and procedural perspective.

2. If spatial visions are anything maybe they can be defined?

Spatial visions as instruments of strategic spatial planning have known a growing interest since the mid-1980's in the world. In Europe, this situation can be explained by the new interest in strategic spatial planning due to the elaboration process of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP). The European Union has also promoted trans-national spatial visions through Interreg IIC programme (1997-1999) and Interreg IIIB programme (2000-2006). The European Union guidelines for the Interreg IIC programme explicitly call to prepare 'visions' for the seven trans-national cooperation areas defined. In spite of this growing interest, academic definitions of spatial visions are rare and they are further not clearly defined in the planning

literature. Spatial visions can be used to describe an area, to present trends, to identify issues, to depict the future and to present desired outcomes in a long-term perspective. This can be done using images (icons, diagrams, maps…) and/or words. Nevertheless, the interest to define spatial visions should not be considered only as an academic one. Indeed, as a tool for spatial planning, it derives from a clear definition, clear aims and clear methodological options.

2.1 Terminology, contents and forms of spatial visions

The term spatial vision is often used as a common word that points toward the need to think spatially about the future of an area. Given that, however, many vague words are used as substitutes for spatial visions: 'guiding principles', 'guidelines', 'perspectives', 'schemes', 'structural outlines', 'vision', 'strategic vision', 'territorial vision'.

The expression spatial vision by itself seems to incorporate the idea of a kind of visual representation. Indeed, it seems sensible that the delivery of strategic spatial options lead to the use of some kind of images. But, taken into account strategic planning documents that present spatial visions, this aspect appears very different from one document to another. First, the type of images produced differs from one document to another: they can be icons, diagrams or maps. Second, generally speaking, spatial visions documents are poor in visual representations. Authors as Stefanie DÜHR or Wil ZONNEVELD explain this situation by the fact that is easier to agree on verbal concepts than on images. According to them, images are more explicit than words that can have different meanings. Then, images tend to generate more critical views than discourses (DÜHR, 2007; ZONNEVELD, 2005).

A comparison of the four spatial visions that have been established under Interreg IIC by Vincent NADIN shows that very few use cartographic representations to illustrate and communicate policy (NADIN, 2000). All documents contain numerous maps showing the existing state of the economy, disparities, infrastructures, and so on, but few illustrations showing future policy options. Only two of the trans-national spatial visions, the first VASAB plan (VASAB for Vision and Strategy Around The Baltic Sea) and the North-West Metropolitan Area Spatial Vision, attempt to communicate policy through some form of visualisation. The two other spatial visions, NorVision (for the North Sea Region) and VisionPlanet (for the CADSES Region, that is to say the Central Adriatic Danubian South-Eastern European Space) do not include any vision of policy for trans-national territories. In the new generation of 'visions' that are being prepared under Interreg IIIB (2000-2006), there also seems to be great reluctance to visualise spatial policy (DÜHR, 2007). The first VASAB plan that generate a 'comprehensive integrated map' has not been used by the subsequent project, VASAB 2010+, which does not include any illustrations of policy themes. According to Stefanie DÜHR, in the NWMA Spatial Vision process, there was considerable difficulty to reach agreement about the vision diagram titled 'An agenda for a sustainable and balanced development'. "Reasons for these difficulties were…political sensitivities about, for instance, how to present certain cities in the urban hierarchy, or how to categorise parts of the territory" (DÜHR, 2007, p. 13). Besides the Interreg Spatial Visions there have also been initiatives to develop non-biding planning strategies for larger territories. Most notably, these are the CEMAT *Guiding Principles for Sustainable Spatial Development of the European Continent* and the ESDP, which both lack policy maps (DÜHR, 2007).

2.2 Status, nature and aims of spatial visions

Spatial visions are considered as an instrument for strategic spatial planning. According to the literature, spatial visions are non-biding soft planning instrument that do not rely on formal decision making and implementation processes but rather on the application of options derived from political choices. Nevertheless, there is some confusion about their place in a strategy building process: are they the result of a process, the final proposal of actors who are in charge to elaborate spatial visions or are they part of a process that allows to justify, in visual terms, political options in the perspective of their implementation?

As instrument for strategic spatial planning spatial visions should help to understand long term spatial trends, to identify issues within an area, to present what can happen in the future and what is a desirable future proposing integrated solutions (integrated policies, integrated tools) for problems and challenges. From that point of view, their aim is to provide, in a long-term perspective, guidelines to establish policy options, programmes and to select projects. But in many cases, policy options are already chosen. The spatial visions appear then as a kind of visualisation of these options (FALUDI, WATERHOUT, 2002). These policy options are linked to general political views on how a given territory should evolve in the future as for instance the call for polycentrism in the ESDP. Given that, one of the aim of spatial visions often presented in the literature is to conceptualize space. The conceptual work consists in applying concepts to a given space. In the case of the European Union, polycentrism has been used as a spatial concept to project a picture of what could be the structure of the European territory. We are then going from one general aim to another: to explain a situation and to derive from it some strategic options in the one hand and to give some ground to already selected political options in the other hand.

Spatial visions are also considered as an instrument to coordinate territorial and sector policies. For instance, in the European context, given the structural, institutional and cultural differences between territories and in between planning traditions, trans-national spatial visions could be a tool to build a common analysis of what are the issues for the area and to choose the means to deal with the challenges the area is facing. From that point of view, spatial visions are considered as an instrument of policy coordination dealing with various territorial levels but also with different sector policies in a multilevel governance perspective. Given that, spatial visions can also involve participation and partnerships between different actors by promoting communication between them. In the European Spatial Planning Observatory Network (ESPON)[1] report on territorial governance it is assumed that "Strategic spatial planning policy could be an interesting way of achieving [the coordination of policies] through the definition of shared spatial vision that combine policy coordination and new participation multilevel governance practices" (ESPON, 2007a, p. 13). Nevertheless, it has to be said that spatial visions are often build through experts consortium (scientific and official experts) that restrict the range of people involved.

[1] ESPON is a research programme on European territorial development, now in its second period (2007-2013), following the former ESPON Programme 2000-2006. It aims to give informations and advices in order to help shaping european policies in relation with territorial cohesion. The programme is approved by the European Commission for a 5 years period an it is funded in the framework of the cohesion policy.

Another aim related to spatial visions is to generate common views of the future of an area with the ultimate aim to build a specific identity for a certain geopolitical region (FELLEGARA, 2004; MASCARUCCI, 2004 in TATZBERGER, 2006). The product is a consensual agreement on what should be the future, identifying shared aims and principles. Nevertheless, some authors underlines that seeking for consensus and simplification lead to little results: images of the desirable future are poor, not very stimulating and according to Erik GLOERSEN in a article dealing with polycentric spatial visions, they tend to hide real issues (as actors power plays) behind some hypothetical representations of poles, nodes and arcs (GLOERSEN, 2005). In fact, there is a kind of distortion between what is at stake when dealing with a desirable future, that is to say innovative proposals, and the consensual shape of spatial visions which derived notably from the political constraints and the determinist context in which they are product.

2.3 Scales of spatial visions

At European scale, spatial visions are considered as a way to answer new spatial planning issues at a new scale in the context of globalization. From that point of view, spatial visions found a justification in the need to widen the scope of spatial planning (i.e. trans-national spatial visions) that is historically enshrined in national or even regional traditions. Spatial visions contribute in that sense to the internationalization of planning (TATZBERGER, 2006). They can be a bridge between European options and regional and national planning activities. For instance, Interreg IIC programme called for establishing a bridge between the ESDP and the national and regional planning system in the future Interreg IIIB framework.

But examples can also be given of spatial visions proposals at national or even regional level. "For example, over the last fifteen years the Nordic countries have been very active in preparing spatial development perspective… In Denmark, the National Planning Reports have since the early 1990s increasingly sought to clarify Denmark's position in a European context and to foster trans-national cooperation" (DÜHR, 2007, p. 66). At regional level, in the framework of the European Spatial Observatory Network, the Spanish example of the Navarre's Spatial Vision has been used as an example to illustrate both the application of ESDP objectives at regional level and regional governance issue (ESPONb, 2007). In France, The *Schémas régionaux d'aménagement du territoire* are prospective documents realised in each French regions for a period of time of approximately 15 to 20 years. Given their prospective nature and their vision of a desirable future, they can be considered as spatial visions. Examples of local spatial visions can also be presented in the French case, using different methods to elaborate territorial integrated projects in a long-term perspective. One of the method consists in involving local elected fellows in the definition of territorial objectives, drawing on maps strengths, weaknesses, trends and projects in order to elaborate, at an inter-municipal scale, an integrated project for a given territory.

2.4 Methodology of spatial visions

There is no precise methodology to build spatial visions. The authors of ESPON 3.2 project titled *Spatial scenarios in relation to the ESDP and the EU Cohesion Policy* (ESPON, 2006) point out the difference between spatial scenarios and spatial visions. The spatial scenarios rely on a known methodology that implies identification of trends based on available data, images of the future based on trends, confrontation to policy options, and evaluation of the impact of these policies on

the trends. Spatial visions, on the other hand, are of a more deterministic nature (as for instance when there are dealing with 'spatialization' of policy options like polycentrism). In general, spatial visions documents only present a chronology of events that depict gathering of data, meetings of experts, the different stages of elaboration, constraints... What is more, due to the iterative process of elaboration of spatial visions, the different steps that lead to the final proposal are weakly known. This situation does not guarantee a clear understanding of the final result. For Stefanie DÜHR this can lead to insecurity and mistrust in between actors (DÜHR, 2007).

2.5 Conclusion

Spatial visions are related to the general framework of strategic spatial planning. Consequently, their contents is long term oriented, they are non-binding soft instrument that does not rely on formal decision making and implementation process but rather on the application of options derived from them. Nevertheless their general guiding role should be discussed. Indeed, spatial visions are considered both as guidelines to establish policies but also as a geographical description of policy options already taken by politicians. Consequently, this ambiguity does not give a serious ground for a general definition of spatial visions. Wil ZONNEVELD defines spatial visions as a 'fuzzy' instrument… Some prefers to speak about a complex instruments or a kind of intermediate product; 'complexity' can be related to its elaboration process, meanwhile 'intermediate' can be related to the permanent balancing between its political and its scientific nature or between "…development and learning process aimed at finding consensus" (TATZBERGER, 2006, p. 282). Taking into account the difficulty to define spatial visions, we would like to propose the following analytical approach.

3. Towards a Wider Analytical Understanding of Spatial Visions

3.1 'Strategic Management Planning'

Based on the discussion so far, a working definition of spatial vision could be a set of imaginary and material pictures of a certain territory's future structured in a spatially coherent way. All visions are spatial in some sense, but spatial visions are more explicit regarding how societal activities and resources should be spatially distributed (as infrastructure, business, work places, educational institutions etc.) and integrated. This definition harmonises with the social constructivist perspective on planning as based on interests, negotiations, arguments and representations rather than an over-arching planning rationality (LAKE, 1992). Making spatial visions are a way to represent reality in a necessarily selective way, "bound up with relations of power, agenda setting, inclusion and exclusion, selective attention, and neglect" (FISCHER, FORESTER, 1993: 1). As representations, spatial visions construct relations between objects and subjects, and works as tools of persuasion (FISCHLER, 1995). Planning is an on-going struggle about criteria, problem definition, interpretations, arguments and positions. Planning can therefore, methodologically speaking, be interpreted as a set of discursive systems of meaning (HEALEY, 1999) and practices that can be studied through for instance ethnographic methods (TEWDWR-JONES, ALLMENDINGER, 1998).

After its heydays in the 1960's, strategic planning ran out of fashion in the 1980's, and was replaced by a project- and ad hoc – based planning practice. (HEALEY, 1998). The increased ambitions to market cities and regions in Europe, together with a more striving planning and

policy agenda on a European level changed the tide in the end of the 1990's. Today's strategic planning is not, however, a return to the 1960's planning philosophy and practice, but rather a hybrid between the 1960's managerialism and the 1980's entrepreneurialism. This hybridisation can perhaps be characterised as a management-oriented strategic planning, with strategies, methods and a terminology that is strongly influenced by business leadership and management knowledge. Concepts as 'marketing', 'branding', 'bench marking', 'SWOT', and, of course, 'visions' has been mixed with more traditional planning terminology.

This 'strategic management planning' is characterised by a strategic reformulation of a specific territory's economic, political and cultural position "in relation to a range of potential external audiences" (HEALEY, 1998: 140), something that is very much done by and in spatial visions. 'Europe' has eventually become a central frame of reference. To HEALEY (ibid.), this strategic and spatial act of repositioning is:

> …accompanied by, and is a key component of, political mobilisation efforts to build internal cohesion among urban region stakeholders … For each stakeholder, the urban region is thus conceptualised differently, both with respect to the 'imagined' spaces for their activities and the different space-time dimensions of what they actually do, their 'operational spaces'. The dynamic for reconceptualising the position of an urban region arises from the need to accomodate…new stakeholders, new policy agendas, …and new governance relations, such as initiatives in government decentralisation, or privatisation.

The challenge, as HEALEY sees it, is to create sustainable relations between different key actors that co-ordinate theirs behaviour. The strategic management planning, as interactive processes that mobilises and strives for consensus becomes the practice that creates these durable alliances. HEALEY further argues that (ibid.):

> An important dimension of this strategic consensus-building work is the generation of a strategic policy discourse, (a way of thinking), and a vocabulary of concepts and metaphors which come to frame how key players think about and justify their investment and regulatory decisions.

3.2 Spatial Visions as Planning Instruments

Even if visions and similar concepts like utopia has been discussed in length in planning theory and practice, not many academics have remarked specifically how spatial visions have become, in many ways, critical planning tools. Often, spatial visions are defined in an unproblematic way. KUMATA et al (2000: 375) define spatial visions as "a common image of the future, upon which actors can find a meaning of the collaborative planned activities and tailor strategies for their future actions". A reason for this, according to Robert SHIPLEY and Ross NEWKIRK, is that it exists a widespread notion that the vision concept is a universal word, which meaning is evident 'for all'. The word is regarded self-explaining (SHIPLEY, NEWKIRK, 1997). The authors therefore construct a taxonomy of definitions of spatial visions based on different characteristics. Spatial visions could be positive/utopic or negative/dystopic, they could be metaphorical or literal, individualistic or collectivist. The main distinction is that spatial visions could be a product of a process or the process itself (SHIPLEY, NEWKIRK, 1999). Among the spatial visions SHIPLEY and NEWKIRK includes in the category 'positive and literal' as 'vision goals' or 'reconstructed utopias' (with a reference to Lewis Mumford). In the category 'positive and

metaphoric', spatial visions equal unity or agreement, visions as a form of principles, values or decision criterion that claims to express the 'truth'. Another definition is the spatial vision as 'vision actions' (SHIPLEY, NEWKIRK, 1999: 583):

> The concept is one of the most striking metaphorical uses of the word vision. What is really meant is not a visual image or picture of the future but the path or activities required to achieve the vision. Baum (1977) gives some theoretical context to this when he explains that images of the future require spatial dimensions (ends) and temporal dimensions (means). The temporal connects the present with the future and the two cannot be separated artificially but can be understood as facets of the same process.

The category 'positive and collectivist' includes visions as question identification and problem formulation, spatial visions as alliance building and confidence building. The spatial vision becomes primarily a creative and problem solving procedure (the final category, positive and individualistic includes visioning as primarily a spiritual quest) (SHIPLEY, NEWKIRK, 1999).

Spatial visions can therefore have many forms, from being rhetorical clichés to being methods to identify questions, formulate problems and decision criteria, and, methods to built up inter-organisational trust and alliances. The spatial vision can be an end product as well a way to reach an end. These distinct differences should not, however, be regarded as isolated from each other. They are all expressions or representations of the same planning process and stems out of common planning discourses.

The concept of 'vision' is further illustrating etymologically. Stemming from the Hebraic word *häzôn* and the Greek *horasis*, it clearly has religious connections (SHIPLEY, 2000). 'Vision' indicates a message from a god canalised through a chosen person, a prophet, shaman or oracle. It has been possible for different priesthood to claim to have the true and only power to know the future. Even if the work with visions is of secularist character, the visions still are, according to some commentators (EMMELIN, 1995), directed towards the already 'saved', that is, the people working with the spatial visions. They further points towards one future that is univocal and certain when the future rather is complex, uncertain and ambiguous. The apparent need to declare the future as univocal and apprehensible results in the systematic undervaluation and subjugation of alternative spatial visions. Further, what is often the case, sensitive problems or dilemmas (as hinted above) are excluded in order to not risk displeasure among the organisations involved. The spatial vision points out an implacable societal direction (EMMELIN, 1995). These aspects have to be discussed, as well as the spatial visions' positive capacities (HULL, 1996; MURTAGH, 2001). If not, the spatial visions are running the risk of becoming the future's 'prisoners', because they have a tendency to fix on a specific outturn and then work its way back instead of focusing on what actually can happen during a certain span of time (LISSACK, ROOS, 2001: 54):

> The very process of working backwards, or defining a game plan for achieving set goals, will restrict your "possibility space" and may interfere with your ability to adapt to changes and seize new opportunities. In this way, having an articulated vision works to silence your company's scouts – the staff members who are always probing for new ideas, new markets, and new possibilities. The strategic vision makes no room for emergence, thus whatever emerges may go unexplored or unexploited.

3.3 Spatial Visions' External and Internal Function

The spatial visions have both external and internal functions: First, the external function is to legitimate the planning process in question, often specific projects, and in its continuation, the organisations behind the vision and the visioning process towards the public and the public opinion. It is of importance that a spatial vision is not regarded as to controversial (COX, MAIR, 1988). A conflict-free spatial planning process also facilitates a believable marketing campaign. In practice, the functional distinction between the spatial visions as a marketing instrument and a planning process instruments is blurred (NEILL, 1995; COX, 1999). Most often, the spatial visions is however unable to masque conflicts among different interests, usually local groups claim for social justice and local needs on the one side and larger, business-based economic and commercial interest on the other side (for examples, see MITCHELL, 1996; STEVENSON, 1999; McCANN, 2001). As a consequence, spatial visions or the work with spatial vision, should not be regarded as apolitical, or neutral from an ideological viewpoint (GOSS, 1996; NEILL, 1999).

The spatial visions internal function is as a least common denominator, and they become a process that binds the involved organisations together. Around a specific territory, a specific set of organisations creates and attempts to legitimise the territory in question. Since this institutionalisation and reproduction of the territory at hand, it is a forward-looking process. As a consequence, the spatial visions become key components in this institutionalisation and in its adherent planning discourse. The spatial visions do not contain conflict ridden and controversial issues since these can have a splintering impact on the unity of the involved organisations. Thoughts and ideas of a more contemplative, reflexive character is also, mostly, left out.

3.4 Towards a Fuller Definition of Spatial Visions

It is now time to extend the working definition of spatial vision (as a set of imaginary and material pictures of a certain territory's future structured in a spatially coherent way).

Since the world is understood through our representation of it, representations of the world are by necessity partial and biased (FALUDI, 1996). To Andreas FALUDI, the world is framed in the planning process; there 'frame' stands for (REIN, SCHÖN, 1986: 4 in FALUDI 1996: 94):

> …a way of selecting, organizing, interpreting and making sense of a complex reality so as to provide guideposts for knowing, analysing, persuading, and acting. A frame is a perspective from which an amorphous, ill-defined problematic situation can be made sense of and acted upon".

Since the production of spatial visions is a part of the planning process, the spatial visions becomes a moment in a chain of world framing, that is, a cognitive outcome (GOODMAN, 1978). Further on, spatial visions are a space-configuring tool, that like simulations precedes the territory (BAUDRILLARD, 1983) as text based and as visual maps. The territory is conceptualised in a strategic way (constructed, delimited, claimed) through an abstract original or model (DE CERTEAU, 1984), a representation of space that thematically links the history and the future of the territory to the contemporary (LEFEBVRE, 1991). But spatial visions are also a power- and disciplinary tool with an outward and an inward direction (as discussed above), and

also an outcome of a discursive struggle about the future shape of a territory. To be more precise, the spatial vision is the result of an argumentation process between different organisations, interests and standpoints, in its turn, based on different actor's representations and imaginations of the world, synchronised and adapted to the actual situation. Of course, not every interest group in society is able to be a part of the visioning processes, or is able to produce spatial visions that becomes widely distributed and discussed and eventually accepted and legitimised in different sectors of society.

Finally, there is possible to give a full definition of spatial visions:

The spatial vision is a cognitive set of material and immaterial pictures of a certain territory's future structured in a spatially coherent way and further a space-configuring tool, a power and disciplinary tool, and an outcome of a discursive struggle about a territory's future.

As spatial visions have been defined above, they harmonises well with what MAARTEN HAJER has conceptualised as 'storylines' (HAJER, 1995, based on DAVIS, HARRÉ, 1990). Hajer's methodological approach is a kind of middle-range discourse analysis and is an approach that is widely used in planning theory. To HAJER (1995: 44), discourse is:

> …a specific ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categorizations that are produced, reproduced, and transformed in a particular set of practices and through which meaning is given to physical and social realities.

Storylines are a form of generative narratives that makes it possible for organisations and other actors involved in the discourse to use different discursive categories in order to give meaning to a specific physical or social phenomena. The key function of storylines is to propose an understanding of a set of much more complex discursive components. Storylines offers a comprehensive view. HAJER (1995: 62) continues:

> Story-lines are narratives on social reality through which elements from many different domains are combined and that provide actors with a set of symbolic references that suggest a common understanding. Story-lines are essential political devices that allow the overcoming of fragmentation and the achievement of discursive closure.

The storylines have also a kind of ritualistic character. As more and more actors accept a certain storyline, they become tropes that rationalises a certain way to approach and a certain attitude towards a specific issue. To HAJER, the storylines are therefore key elements in the argumentative turn in planning discussed in the last section (HAJER, 1995: 63):

> Story-lines fulfil an essential role in the clustering of knowledge, the positioning of actors, and, ultimately, in the creation of coalitions amongst the actors of a given domain…The discursive practice of the metaphor…comes under the definition of a story-line, as do analogies, historical references, clichés, appeals to collective fears or senses of guilt. These shallow and ambiguous discursive practices are the essential discursive cement that creates communicative networks among actors with different or at best overlapping perceptions and understandings. They are, therefore, also the prime vehicles of change.

So, the storylines and the spatial visions have much in common. They both offers a comprehensive understanding through a reduction of a much more complex reality. They are further both political and cognitive planning tools that ties a set of planning actors together as they "creates communicative networks among actors with different or at best overlapping perceptions and understandings" (HAJER, 1995: 63). The largest difference is that spatial visions in an explicit way stress the spatiality of a territory.

4. Conclusion: Studying Spatial Visions

To conclude, spatial visions seem to be a good instrument to articulate different dimensions of European planning. Comprehensive understanding seems useful when dealing with the different realities of territories, actors and planning systems in Europe. Their political and cognitive nature combines political orientations and need for expertise. But their weakness, both from a scientific and operational point of view, comes from the uncertain definition and a somehow controversial status. It seems to us that some conditions need to be fulfilled to make spatial visions a consistent tool for planning. Following this, we therefore present below what could be the main lines, or conditions, for a future research on spatial visions.

First condition would be that the spatial visions' values and ideas were on line with European ones derived from the EU regional policy aims and from the cohesion policy objectives. It can be said that EU's Regional Policy is grounded upon the idea that European construction should not lead to unbalanced development but should, on the contrary, be capable of transposing the ideals and values of the European democracies into the organisation of their territories by reinforcing economic and social cohesion and by ensuring equivalent access to services to citizens wherever they happen to live. This analytical proposal would allow questioning both the consistency of spatial visions towards European orientations but also the consistency of European orientations themselves when they are developed in an operational framework.

The second condition for spatial visions to be consistent tools for spatial planning is that they produce expected effects both in term of concrete projects but also in terms of coordination of territorial and sector policies. The study work proposed should be considered as an evaluation of the impact of spatial visions on territories and of their efficiency in promoting coordination.

The third condition is that spatial visions appear as legitimate both from a scientific and a procedural point of view. From a scientific viewpoint, spatial visions should give way to a common understanding of different contexts, scales and spaces within Europe. That is why, it seems important to study to which extend spatial visions use notions and concepts in a way that permit a common understanding of spaces across Europe. In one word, the objective would be to see if spatial visions help to better conceptualize European space. From a procedural viewpoint, legitimacy depends also on the building process of spatial visions. In that perspective, it would be interesting to study to which extend spatial visions appears as a top-down process or a bottom-up process according to the actors involved and to evaluate if there is a relation between the building process chosen and the actors support to the delivery of concrete actions.

The investigation of these three aspects will make it possible to evaluate to which extend spatial visions are useful in spatial planning and to identify the conditions in which they could be (more) useful.

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