SEARCHING NEW OPERATIVE CONCEPTS TO EVALUATE SPATIAL AND SOCIAL COHESION

Authors
Isabel ANDRÉ (isabel.andre@netcabo.pt) - Professor in the Universidade de Lisboa, Dept. Geography and Partner of GEOIDEIA, Territorial Planning and Evaluation Consultancy
Fernando João MOREIRA (fernandojoao@netcabo.pt) - Professor in the Universidade Lusófona de Humanidades e Tecnologias, Dept. Geography and Dept. Urbanism and Partner of GEOIDEIA, Territorial Planning and Evaluation Consultancy

Abstract
The starting point of this paper is to argue that indicators often used to measure spatial and social cohesion are not the most adequate to concretise the conceptual framework of community policies in this field. Frequently, cohesion is evaluated through the calculation of social (income groups, professional groups, etc.) and geographical distributions of the same economic indicators that are used to evaluate competitiveness. Being so, we end up with a biased approach, stressing the market-economic view of development.

The evaluation of policies and programs focused in marginal territories (rural areas, border areas and ultra-periphery regions) made clear to us the need to develop new operative concepts in order to find the appropriated indicators to evaluate cohesion levels.

Our argument is that the cluster of notions we can find under the umbrella of social capital seems to be a novel and useful approach to the elaboration of operative concepts and indicators about the social and the territorial dimensions of cohesion. Co-operation, trust, reciprocity and social innovation are, in our view, essential conditions to increase social cohesion. In addition, territorial cohesion - equal opportunities in spite of the place were people live - also lies in the reinforcement of co-operation and spatial links of solidarity, both in the perspective of proximity relations and network’s integration.
INTRODUCTION

Markets liberalization and the weakness of the welfare state in Europe have conducted to significant cohesion deficits especially since the 80’s. It has become evident that economic increase resulting from market forces generated the exclusion of certain activities, social groups and places. In the name of competitiveness, cohesion has become compromised.

That situation has befallen particularly critical with the European Union enlargement in 1986. The entry of Portugal and Spain has increased significantly the inequalities in the EU territory and the supports of ERDF, created in 1975, were not enough to guarantee social equity and spatial equilibrium. In this context has emerged the social and economic cohesion policy established through the Single Act in 1987 and supported by the Cohesion Fund created in 1992 in the sequence of the Treaty of Maastricht.

A new revision of cohesion concepts and policies took place in the last years as a consequence of the social and economic evolution observed in the nineties and also because the next EU enlargement to the East European countries that will mean not only a significant population and area increase but also the inclusion of economies, societies and cultures with very distinct features.

To the concepts of social and economic cohesion has been added the concept of spatial cohesion what presuppose that the Community wish not only to reduce social and economic regional disparities but also to reach other objectives expressed in the title of the Second Report on Economic and Social Cohesion (2001): “Unity, solidarity, diversity for Europe, its people and its territory”.

In this paper we will present first, in general terms, the policy guidelines on the cohesion dimension of regional development, then we will discuss the concept of spatial cohesion assuming that it congregates ethics, political, economic social and cultural processes of cohesion/exclusion which have different spatialities. In the second part of the paper we will introduce the notion of social capital as a conceptual instrument to evaluate spatial cohesion and we will identify some guidelines to define adequate indicators.
SPATIAL COHESION IN COMMUNITY POLICIES

Emerged 10 years ago the European cohesion policy has already been significantly reformulated. In a few words we can say that it has emerged with a bi-dimensional scope (economic and social cohesion) and since 1997 it includes also a spatial dimension. Otherwise the contents of each dimension have changed too.

The member states have decided in Maastricht to stress the reinforcement of economic and social cohesion. It supposed a more balanced spatial distribution of GNP per capita at the state level as well as at the regional level. It meant also a special support to the most vulnerable segments of labour markets and the eradication of the most critical poverty situations.

Since the middle of the 90’s the debate on spatial cohesion has assumed a relevant place on policy agendas. The regional entities of the EU associated in the Committee of the Regions have developed a complex struggle in order to include this new cohesion dimension (Husson, C. 1999). Why has it so difficult? How to understand such a strong resistance?

Territory was never been explicitly assumed as a fundament of European sovereignty, on the contrary territory was strictly maintained in the field of national sovereignties at least at the symbolic level. Otherwise in a certain way spatial cohesion is viewed as a blockage to free economic competition because it is related to the positive discrimination of some places, activities or social groups and also because it implies the rendering of general interest services with a permanent and universal character. In a first moment, the concept of general interest services has correspond just to energy and water distribution, transportation and communications but in a second time the concept has assumed a wider sense clearly linked to the reinforcement of spatial cohesion being also included services as housing, education, health, social care or financial services (André, I. et al., 2000).

However in spite of the resistance of the most liberal economic sectors, spatial cohesion was explicitly included in cohesion policies through the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1997. In this new context, the European Spatial Development
Perspective (ESDP) represents the first important step in order to make operative the concept of spatial cohesion (Postdam, 1999). The ESDP analyses in detail the main evolution trends of European geography and identifies a set of proposals in order to reinforce spatial development.

Among the most influential factors of the European space reshaping, the ESDP underlines: (i) the progressive economic integration and the consequent increment of member states co-operation; (ii) the increasing protagonism of regional and local actors and their role more and more relevant in the definition of development policies; (iii) the consecutive phases of Community enlargement and the evolution of relations with neighbourhood countries.

The community spatial integration is based, according the ESDP, on three main goals presented in the next table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOALS</th>
<th>GUIDELINES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Polycentric Spatial Development</strong></td>
<td>Polycentric and balanced spatial development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>and a New Urban-Rural Relationship</strong></td>
<td>Dynamic and competitive cities and urban regions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Endogenous development, diversity and performance of rural spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban-rural partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parity of Access to Infrastructure</strong></td>
<td>Integrated view of accessibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>and Knowledge</strong></td>
<td>Polycentric development as a concept to increase accessibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Efficient and sustainable use of infrastructures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diffusion of innovation and knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wise Management of the Natural</strong></td>
<td>Natural and Cultural Heritage as a Development Asset</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>and Cultural Heritage</strong></td>
<td>Development and preservation of the natural heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Efficient water resources management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creative management of cultural heritage and landscapes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the proposals to the ESDP application is specially stressed the need of cooperation, the search of consensus and the voluntary nature of actions, seen as the main keys to the success of spatial development policy.

However these conditions seem to be really difficult to apply in the European space. The Community Programs LEADER and INTERREG, based precisely on cooperation (the first at the local scale and the second at the regional and national scales) have faced strong barriers that really trouble the spatial cohesion process.

Multiple reasons can explain the difficulties. Among them, the persistence of social values and practices with individualistic features or centred on microcommunities specific interests should be underlined. Another important reason is the difficulty to harmonise political and administrative models and norms, very distinct in each member state. For example the co-operation between Portugal and Spain in the framework of INTERREG has been frequently troubled by the incapacity to connect public management cultures and practices significantly different.

The relations among the four public management levels – local, regional, national and communitary – becomes also especially problematic. The subsidiarity principle is often very difficult to apply. It is not always clear what is the most appropriate scale to reach the best solutions to specific problems given that adequate answers depend also on the capacity to have a good diagnosis as well as on the quality of action strategies. These tasks impose strong resources mainly in the field of knowledge and information, which are difficult to mobilise at the local level.

Otherwise political and economic nets of dependence among the different levels of public management produce often conflict situations or, on the contrary, relations of submission. In both cases the effective participation of the weaken actors is compromised.

THE CONCEPT AND THE INDICATORS OF SPATIAL COHESION

In the framework of EU regional and local development policies the concept of spatial cohesion is often related with territorial balance promoted mainly by physical, social and cultural access to goods, services, information and knowledge. Otherwise
cohesion is also linked to the sense of belonging and identity that confer to spatial entities the status of places in the sense of social and cultural communities – the main partners of European construction - "a vast community of communities” (Bessis, S. 1995).

We argue that an operative concept of spatial cohesion should adopt a triple point of view:

- **A distributive perspective** – related to the access to infrastructures, equipments, information and knowledge.

- **A relational perspective** – connected to the capacity of individual and collective actors to develop networks in order to empower themselves reinforcing their access to development resources.

- **An institutional perspective** – related to the role of institutions and organizations on the mobilization of resources and competencies in order to densify and qualify relational links.

The relational and the institutional views should integrate the issue of inclusion processes, meaning the ways, resources and methods to fight against exclusion. As we have already said before, the European development model that has succeeded the crisis of the seventies was signed by a strong markets liberalisation linked to the withdrawal of the welfare state. Investment – private and public - was progressively concentrated in the most competitive sectors as well as in the regions that offer the best opportunities. This development model reflects a point of view clearly centred on economy, where society, nature or culture are viewed just as resources capable to increase the capital value or as barriers to its reproduction. Such development model has produced high levels of economic growth but it also has generated deep social disruptions and increasing regional and sub regional unbalance.

In this conceptual framework we can identify five main cohesion deficits – exclusion realms – presented in the following table.
## EXCLUSION REALMS AND COHESION DEFICITS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXCLUSION REALMS</th>
<th>COHESION DEFICITS</th>
<th>MAIN EXCLUSION TARGETS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>POLITICS</strong></td>
<td>Citizenship, decisions participation</td>
<td>Immigrants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CULTURE</strong></td>
<td>Identification with dominant cultural values, related specially to consumption, youthfulness, aesthetics, leisure</td>
<td>Rural populations, Elder people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SOCIAL</strong></td>
<td>Enough income to live over poverty line (European patterns)</td>
<td>Elder people, Handicap persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Access to social services</td>
<td>Monoparental families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Equal opportunities for women and men</td>
<td>Immigrants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ECONOMICS</strong></td>
<td>Productivity levels of traditional industry sectors – weaker segments of entrepreneurial fabric</td>
<td>Industry sectors or enterprises with reactive strategies based on cost reduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Human resources qualifications</td>
<td>Unemployees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Technical, social and personal competencies</td>
<td>People with precary jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EDUCATION AND INFORMATION</strong></td>
<td>Permanency, integration and success in the school system</td>
<td>People with low school levels and high degrees of illiteracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Access to several information sources and capacity to decode media discourses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**SEARCHING NEW OPERATIVE CONCEPTS TO EVALUATE SPATIAL AND SOCIAL COHESION**  
Isabel ANDRÉ and Fernando MOREIRA
We argue that spatial cohesion deficits result from the confluence and merging of specific exclusion processes. Otherwise spatial cohesion is materialised in:

- Institutional capacity to build or to profit local and regional development opportunities and to avoid dangerous risks;
- Integration in places/regions nets;
- Social and cultural sense of place belonging.

To face all these cohesion deficits imposes to rethink models of local and regional development. To go on to stress the increase of competitiveness underestimating social and spatial results is a very riskful way to reach development. Exclusion is not just a problem of ethics and justice. It becomes easily a threat to the progress and dynamism of “included” entities - social and cultural groups, economic sectors and enterprises, regions and places.

Therefore, spatial and social cohesion emerges as a priority of development with the same relevance than competitiveness and not as a negative externality of economic growth that altruist people want to avoid in the name of social solidarity.

The mainstream of EU cohesion policies considers 3 cohesion scopes: economic, social and spatial. However we argue that spatial cohesion should not be considered at the same level as economic or social cohesion - spatial cohesion should be viewed as an integrated perspective that includes economic and social issues. Our concept of spatial cohesion includes every geographical scale in a network perspective. It includes also proximity or long distance relations that promote spatial integration.

Otherwise, the framework to evaluate the reinforcements of cohesion in its triple scope should adopt a multidimensional perspective based not only in the exclusion realms but also related with the geographic scales and linked to specific institutional agents.

---

1 View the Second Report on Economic and Social Cohesion (EC, 2001) that in spite of its title includes 3 main analytical parts about economic, social and spatial cohesion.
### SCALES AND AGENTS OF COHESION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COHESION SCOPES</th>
<th>COHESION SCALES</th>
<th>MAIN COHESION AGENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>Regional, national or transnational</td>
<td>Enterprises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Micro-local, local or regional</td>
<td>Local public institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spatial</td>
<td>Every scales in a network perspective – proximity relations or long distance links that benefit spatial integration</td>
<td>Local, regional, national and European institutions respecting the subsidiarity principle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When we refer the role of public institutions it is relevant to remember the recent trends on their evolution. Since the 90’s have occurred a significant strategic change that links public administration to the management of common patrimony including in the new perspective the reinforcement of solidarity, co-operation, negotiation, reciprocity and voluntary actions. This means specifically the following changes:

- Transference of resources and competencies to the local level;
- Dissociation between income and labour (e.g. minimum social income)
- Engagements between public sector and the Third Sector assuming the last one an increasing protagonism;
- Institution of risk capital funds and micro-credit lines.

This new view of public management represents definitely a qualitative progression in democratic processes that includes mainly a wider and deeper definition of general interest being crucial to reinforce cohesion.
“In order to be meaningful once again, democracy needs to recreate itself by opening up to the ensemble of social actors, to develop new forms of partnership, to break with centralism, and to take into account the various possible levels of decision-making involving citizen participation.” (Bessis, S. 1995: 22-23)

According the communitary guidelines respecting cohesion policy and the conceptual framework presented before we will present now some operative concepts and indicators in order to evaluate trends and levels of cohesion and not, as we frequently find in various reports, the distributions (by region, by sector, by social groups, …) of competitiveness indicators. The operative concepts and indicators we propose here are based in the notion of social capital.

THE NOTION OF SOCIAL CAPITAL – FROM THE CONCEPTS TO THE PRACTICE OF COHESION EVALUATION

Introduced by Pierre Bordieu (1979), related to unequal resources of power in a cultural approach, by James Coleman, in an educational point of view, and developed by Francis Fukuyama (1995 and 1998), stressing the role of trust relations to the reinforcement of regional competitiveness, the concept of social capital with the meaning adopted here was developed and applied by Robert Putnam since 1993. Supported in the Italian reality, Robert Putnam has argued that prosperity in some regions is more related with social capital than with economic or human capital. The conceptual framework of social capital was later on applied in the USA, conducing Putnam to the conclusion that the stocks of social capital have decrease significantly in last decades. However, in a small paper published in February 2002, the author supports the idea that the events occurred at 11 September seem to have regenerated social capital due to the need to face a powerful and unexpected enemy (a "galvanizing crisis").

The notion of spatial and relational networks is crucial in the concept of social capital adopted here: "whereas physical capital refers to physical objects and human capital refers to properties of individual, social capital refers to connections among
individuals - social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them." (Putnam, R. 2000:19). But the concept of social capital also comprises the idea of belonging to spatial based communities where proximity relations shape the stronger social networks. This idea of belonging includes, according to Putnam, two forms of social capital: bonding capital (internal cohesion links) and bridging capital (external cohesion links), concepts particularly relevant to the discussion of local and regional development stressing its cohesion dimension.

The central role of institutions in the process of regional and local development, came from the regulation perspective, assumes a wider meaning: "social capital is not just the sum of the institutions which underpin a society - it is the glue that holds them together" (World Bank 1999).

In order to understand why some social networks in certain spatial contexts produce social capital and others do not, it is crucial to extend the conceptual references of this research to the innovation realms. According to Frank Moulaert (2000) "it is only by developing new forms of revealing needs, of cooperation, and of democratic management, that the basic needs of the most deprived citizens will be recognized and met". In the view of this author "local development becomes less a question of guaranteeing purchasing power, and more one of promoting a structural change to improve the individual and collective potential to respond to needs".

In this sense, we argue that social capital plays a key-role on the process of cohesion reinforcement, especially in a period of new risks for local communities, arising from an increasingly economic globalisation and from the dismantling of Welfare State.

In order to find solid bases to evaluate the level of social capital and by this way the degree of social and spatial cohesion we consider the following relational contexts of solidarity and co-operation based on trust and reciprocity:

- family – close personal relations;
- community – open personal relations and social relations (*stricto sensus*);
- enterprises - labour and production relations;
- institutions and organisations – citizenship.

As we have said before the confluence and merging of those four relational contexts define the spatial framework - places, regions, nations or international spaces. Inside
each relational context or in their merging can be defined the core conditions of social capital reinforcement in terms of networks and in terms of norms.

## RELATIONAL CONTEXTS AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

| Spatial framework – confluence and merging of specific relational contexts: |
| Networks | Type – domestic/ethnic/generational/entrepreneurial/... |
| Structure of social and spatial relations | Space – from household to global world |
| SPANNING CAPITAL | Structure – open/closed, dense/sparse; homogeneous/heterogeneous, ... |
| Links – vertical/horizontal | Trust – personal trust/social trust/institutional trust |
| Norms | Reciprocity - in kind/in lieu; direct/indirect; immediate/delayed |
| Quality of social and spatial relations | |
| BONDING CAPITAL | |

Adapted from Stone, W. 2001

The table presented before synthesises in our view the methodological guidelines in order to identify the most appropriated indicators to evaluate social and spatial cohesion.

### CONCLUSIONS

To finish this paper we would like to stress four ideas:

- The promotion of socio-spatial cohesion does not hurt significantly the territorial component (effective or symbolic) of national sovereignties.
Citizens assume more and more multiple belongings. This situation deserves high but complex levels of inclusion.

- The dissociation between social and spatial cohesion is artificial and should be used just with analytical goals. In the context of policies and programs of regional and local development the adequate concept is socio-spatial cohesion directly linked to identity and sense of belonging founded in multiple territories – from the household to the global world.

- The notion of social capital allows making operative the core concepts of socio-spatial cohesion - identity and sense of belonging – because it relates them with co-operation, trust and reciprocity.

- The evaluation of socio-spatial cohesion levels cannot be a set of Lorenz curves – concentration/dispersion levels of economic variables. Indicators should envisage relational processes and conditions to avoid exclusion mainly expressed by networks and norms.

REFERENCES


