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Re-conceptualising Territorial Cohesion Through the Prism of Spatial Justice: Critical Perspectives on Academic and Policy Discourses

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1 Introduction

One the key principles of the European Union has been its emphasis on the need to promote a Social Model, one which seeks "to give to the people of Europe the unique blend of economic well-being, social cohesiveness and high overall quality of life" (European Commission 1994, 1). But, of course, one of the most significant aspects of this Social Model is the fact that it has also been spatialised in fundamental ways. From the

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1980s, there has been a growing academic and policy focus on the specific ways that "Europe was divided into a geographical and development core and periphery" (e.g. Sarmiento-Mirwaldt 2015, 433). It was also acknowledged that a concerted set of interventions was needed in order to reduce these territorial inequalities. The European Commission (European Commission 2004, 27), by the beginning of the new century, stated that it wanted "to help achieve a more balanced development by reducing existing disparities, preventing territorial imbalances and making both sectoral policies which have a spatial impact and regional policy more coherent". Convergence policies of different kinds have used this explicitly spatialised way of thinking as a way of targeting under-performing regions, while at the same time seeking to improve the overall competitiveness of all European regions. And yet, despite high levels of investment and institutional support, such convergence policies have experienced limited success. For example, some EU countries such as Hungary and Poland have long been receiving a large share of Cohesion and European Regional Development Fund funding and yet they have introduced certain illiberal social and political reforms that are in stark contrast with often-mentioned "fundamental values" of the European Union. At the same time, EU-orchestrated austerity policies imposed on these countries have only served to underline the entrenched and worsening character of regional and socio-economic inequalities. For instance, empirical data demonstrate that 16 out of 26 countries in the European Union (with available data) have registered increases in regional GDP disparities for NUTS3 regions between 2007 and 2011 (including France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain and the UK). It is against this backdrop that many academics and policy-makers are beginning to question some of the fundamental principles that underpin the European Social and Spatial Model. It is against this conceptual and empirical backdrop, too, that we write this chapter.

We have two main aims in this chapter. Our first aim is to review academic and policy engagements with the ideas of territorial and regional inequalities within Europe, drawing particular attention to the emphasis that has been placed on understanding such inequalities in relation to ideas of territorial cohesion (TAEU 2007). We discuss some of the conceptual limitations of the idea of territorial cohesion. Our

second aim is to deliberate the conceptual and more policy-related benefits that potentially arise from the notion of spatial justice.

Spatial justice is a concept that has gained some conceptual traction since the early 1970s (e.g. Harvey 1973; Lefebvre 1970) and there is some evidence to show that it is now being viewed by European policy-makers as a viable alternative or even substance to territorial cohesion policies. We outline some of the potential benefits that might accrue from framing European interventions that seek to reduce territorial and regional inequalities through reference to ideas of spatial justice.

While the idea of spatial justice does not represent a policy panacea, we maintain that it has the potential to: (1) allow academics, policy-makers and the public alike to coalesce around a positive and aspirational end goal, centred on the idea of justice; (2) enable a more progressive discourse on regional development to emerge, which focuses on the capabilities of regions and territories to develop and succeed (rather than being a discourse that views regions and territories as ones that exist merely to receive financial and institutional support from the outside); and (3) allow plural understandings of development, justice, well-being and the 'good life' to emerge—ones that are attuned to the regions and territories from which they emanate.

2   The Rise and Fall of the European Union's Territorial Cohesion: From Competitive to Inclusive Europe?

The European social model and conceptions of economic competitiveness within Europe have increasingly been viewed in spatial terms since the late 1990s. From this period onwards, the European Commission began to use the concept of territorial cohesion as a policy tool to tackle regional differentiation and spatial disparities (European Commission 2001). Implementing territorial cohesion as part of the European Social Model has aimed at extending the principle of social protection into more spatial realms (Davoudi 2007, 81). Territorial cohesion, thus, seeks to tackle place- and region-specific problems that have the potential to undermine attempts to establish the European Union as

a strong political and economic territory. The emergence of European spatial planning agendas and practices, for instance, has been explicitly concerned with reducing socio-economic inequalities between different European states and regions (Abrams 2014; Faludi 2010). Structural funds represent another important tool that the European Union has used as a way of addressing spatial inequalities, with varying levels of success (Allen 2005). These kinds of policies have involved an explicit articulation of the European Union's territorial cohesion agenda. The idea of territorial cohesion was re-emphasised in 2005 after the enlargement of the European Union. Since then, addressing territorial inequalities within the framework of the European Union has grown in importance due to the 2008 economic crisis and the notable wave of immigration from outside the Union, which peaked in 2016.

The idea of territorial cohesion has, therefore, grown in significance since the turn of the century, in both policy and more academic contexts. Figure 1 illustrates the cumulative number of hits for the term 'territorial cohesion' on the basis of a Google Scholar search. The figure reveals that the number of academic works using the term territorial cohesion has grown at the same time as territorial cohesion has emerged
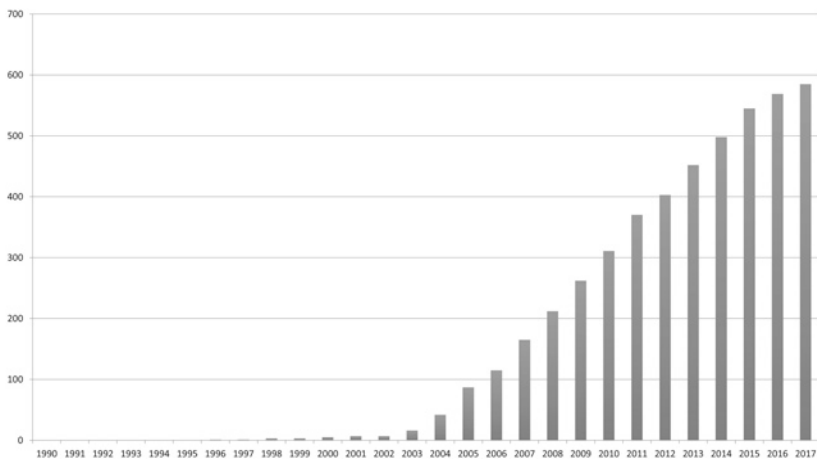

Fig. 1 The cumulative number of hits for the term 'territorial cohesion' on the basis of a Google Scholar search

as a policy priority within the European Union. Until the publication of the Amsterdam Treaty, 'territorial cohesion' gives around 150 search engine hits, while the search for the period from 1997 to 2002—the year following the publication of the Second Report on Economic and Social Cohesion (European Commission 2001), which devoted a separate section to territorial cohesion—gives around 250 hits. The search for the next five-year period (2003–2008) indicates a booming era for research on territorial cohesion within academia (over 2100 hits). This is not a big surprise, given that this period witnessed key milestones in the European Union's spatial policies, most notably the publication of the Third Report on Economic and Social Cohesion (European Commission 2004), the publication of the preliminary results of the politically influential ESPON programme (ESPON 2004), the publication of the proposal for the EU constitution, and the launching of the Territorial Agenda of the EU, whose final version was published in 2007 (TAEU 2007). In all these documents, territorial cohesion is brought to the fore as a significant political agenda both for the EU and for the individual member states (cf. Davoudi 2005). Not surprisingly, such developments also acted as the source for considerable academic debate. Since 2009, the number of academic publications referring to territorial cohesion has grown even more remarkably. The almost 12,000 hits with Google Scholar indicate that the concept has not only been consolidated in the policy vocabulary of the European Union (in the Directorate General on Regional Policy in particular), but also that it is no longer addressed solely within a small cadre of European planners and planning scholars, or EU bureaucrats. Instead, it has been grasped across disciplinary boundaries by a wide range of scholars interested in issues of spatial policies and development within and beyond the EU.

And yet, a purely statistical account of the growth of the significance of territorial cohesion as an approach to governance and as an academic concept does not say much about the meaning that is ascribed to the term. In broad terms, we maintain that territorial cohesion policies have enabled the territory of the European Union to be treated as a singular geopolitical object that can be measured, mapped, analysed and acted upon (Luukkonen and Moisio 2016). Territorial cohesion, viewed

in these broad terms, is a political technology of territory that seeks to engender territorial solidarity and identification at the scale of the European Union, and in so doing challenges nation-state centred forms of identification. And yet, when one digs deeper, it becomes apparent that the idea and practice of territorial cohesion in the European Union have been characterised by multiple goals and even slightly contradictory objectives. It is not surprising, therefore, that territorial cohesion has been named as a highly ambiguous and contested term with many different layers of meaning (see, for instance, Mirwaldt et al. 2008; Servillo 2010; Atkinson and Zimmermann 2016; Schön 2005; Evers 2008). Significantly, from a more geographical perspective, it has been suggested that territorial cohesion might mean different things to different member states and actors, with the concept being appropriated to fulfil various policy demands in different places (Faludi 2015). In this sense, territorial cohesion has remained an elusive and complex concept, open to many different and varied interpretations. In essence, it is a flexible and normative European policy goal that can be manipulated in order to promote specific priorities in different national/regional contexts.

Adopting a genealogical or historical approach shows a strong connection between territorial cohesion and two pre-existing and contrasting conceptual frameworks. At one level, the discourse and practice of territorial cohesion have their roots in the decades-old French regional political idea of *aménagement du territoire*, a sort of spatial planning or regional policy that is directed towards maintaining territorial (national) unity by decentralising powers and mobilising regional and local actors around national territorial policies (e.g. Davoudi 2005; Faludi 2004). At the same time, there are links between territorial cohesion and the German tradition of regional policies called a comprehensive integrated approach. Compared to the French tradition, which is sometimes seen as a regional economic approach to spatial planning, the German tradition conceptualises space and spatial policies somewhat differently. Faludi (2004) has noted that from the French perspective, territorial cohesion is seen as ensuring balanced economic development and the establishment of solidarity between regions, whereas the German tradition directs towards the broader perspective of sustainable development.

Focusing on these genealogies demonstrates that the idea of territorial cohesion—almost from the very outset—has been characterised by different emphases and, potentially, inconsistencies and contradictions. These tensions become even more apparent when one seeks to chart the different ways in which territorial cohesion has been discussed and applied within different policies since the beginning of the new century. We identify three different approaches to territorial cohesion in these more recent academic and policy engagements with the term.

The first approach examines territorial cohesion from the perspective of shifts in governance. In these studies, territorial cohesion is understood as something that provides new opportunities or frameworks for governing the European Union as well as national spaces, with structural funds being particularly significant. The governance perspective on territorial cohesion and development highlights the existence of a "fourth tier" of governance within the European Union (Holder and Layard 2011, 2) which potentially "unbundles" state territoriality. In this perspective, the idea and the concept of multilevel governance are seen as a way of providing new possibilities for cross-sectoral and cross-border cooperation between different forms and levels of governance.

The second approach involves those studies that conceive of territorial cohesion as an explicit policy objective. Studies in this category examine the tensions between the policy objectives of, on the one hand, promoting spatially balanced economic development and, on the other, ensuring the competitiveness of regions and territories within Europe. In some of these contributions, territorial cohesion is seen as a way of combining these two objectives. Schön (2005), for instance, argues that pursuing territorial cohesion contributes to the redistribution of resources and the promotion of economic competitiveness by putting into practice integrated and holistic spatial development approaches. According to this politically popular reasoning, territorial cohesion policy has the potential to both reduce disparities and strengthen competitiveness by enabling regions to exploit their endogenous potentials (see Faludi and Waterhout 2005; Evers 2008).

The third approach to territorial cohesion in the scientific literature focuses more explicitly on those spatial frameworks or configurations

that have the potential to reduce inequalities. In some studies, territorial cohesion is considered to give new stimulus to the European Spatial Development Planning agenda of promoting a polycentric spatial pattern for Europe, which would ultimately lead to balanced and sustainable development (Faludi 2005). Besides polycentricity, territorial cohesion is also connected—at least in implicit ways—to the idea of place-based development. Deriving from the Barca Report (2009), place-based development refers to the idea that public policies ought to be context-sensitive in a way that better takes into account the specific needs, characteristics, and potentials of places and regions. This is a theme that we will return to in the following section.

There is obvious overlap between these different approaches to territorial cohesion. Moreover, these approaches highlight the elusive nature of territorial cohesion within the academic and policy literatures. In both EU policy documents and academic debates, it is not always clear whether the concept refers to a policy objective that is pursued through a particular policy means or whether territorial cohesion is the policy tool or technology itself that is used to achieve certain policy goals. What is common in each of these approaches, however, is the emphasis that is placed on economic measures of territorial inequality and/or cohesion. Territorial cohesion, in this way, is primarily understood as a difference in economic production (in terms of GDP) between regions within Europe. Despite some limited references that are made to social forms of solidarity, the justifications that are used in order to promote territorial cohesion are almost invariably made on the basis of economic forms of accounting. Variance in regional GDP is viewed as being problematic, in this regard, because the European Union cannot afford the economic burden of 'lagging regions' (e.g. Hübner 2005). This emphasis on the economic dimensions of territorial inequality over and above social ones also highlights the agenda to label the allocation of structural funds as an act of investing rather than being a redistribution of public money. The concept of territorial cohesion and related spatially focused funding instruments of the European Union have been struggling with their public image and there has been a persistent political strategy within EU rhetoric to label these "spatial" funding instruments as investments rather than a redistribution of resources.

Perhaps as a result of the elusive nature of the term, some have begun to question the usefulness of territorial cohesion as a policy concept and policy goal. As claimed by Hadjimichalis (in this volume) "territorial cohesion was high in the agenda but after 2008 and particularly after the crisis in 2010, it has been totally lost from any EU document". While Hadjimichalis may be overstating the situation somewhat, it is evident that more recent understandings of territorial cohesion within EU documentation have become more limited, 'hollow' and multifaceted than ever. For example, the recent Cohesion Report from 2017 (European Commission 2017) is structured in chapters on economic, social and territorial cohesion. Territorial cohesion is now treated as an issue that is somehow separate and distinct from economic and social ones, with territorial cohesion being viewed in relation to different environmental challenges (e.g. climate change and pollution) affecting EU regions and with regard to various territorial cooperation schemes (e.g. cross-border connections). While these themes are obviously important for the future of the European Union at large, the nature of their connection to an economically and socially equal and just Europe is far from being clear.

We maintain that the above comments illustrate an increasing uncertainty in relation to the meaning of territorial cohesion and, arguably, a growing doubt—among policy-makers and academics alike—about its descriptive, analytical and normative value. From our perspective, beyond the general level of uncertainty that exists about its actual meaning, some of the more problematic aspects of the term territorial cohesion are as follows. First, there is potential for a discourse of territorial cohesion—especially when it is allied with talk of territorial inequalities—to reinforce a perception that certain 'under-performing' regions and states are somehow problematic or lacking, whether in relation to economic, social or environmental measures (and, of course, these are measures that are defined by those regions and states that are successful). In focusing on such issues, there is a danger that a status of inadequacy or even victimhood is ascribed to these regions. Second, and following on from the previous point, the traditional focus on territorial cohesion tends to promote an academic and policy discourse in which these 'problematic' or 'lagging' regions must receive external aid

in order to succeed. Again, such a discourse tends to emasculate certain regions and states. Third, the discourse of territorial cohesion—in focusing on particular economic, social and environmental measures of success or failure—tends to define understandings of development, justice, well-being and the 'good life' in narrow ways, with little scope for alternative measures of success or progress to emerge. Lagging regions, in this way, are forever doomed to try to 'catch up' with their more successful counterparts, playing a game whose rules have been defined by the 'winners'.

There is a dire need, we argue, to ask whether spatial protection (Davoudi 2007) that is associated with the European Social Model can be imagined in alternative ways. It is in this context that we believe that a consideration of questions of spatial justice can offer some useful insights. Spatial justice, as we proceed to demonstrate below, allows: (1) various stakeholders to develop a common discourse that is focused on a positive and aspirational end goal, centred on the idea of justice; (2) a more progressive discourse to emerge, which focuses on the capabilities of regions and territories to develop and succeed; and (3) plural understandings of development, justice, well-being and the 'good life' to be imagined and brought to life.

3   Spatial Justice—Review of Academic and Policy Discussions of the Concept

Our aim in this section is to use and extend existing literatures on spatial justice as a way of articulating an alternative approach to engaging with territorial inequalities, in both academic and, especially, policy contexts. We maintain that the concept and idea of spatial justice throughout its history has been primarily focused on an urban scale[1] but has the potential to make a useful contribution to understanding the unequal distribution of economic resources, public services and well-being at other geographical scales, not least the regional scale, particularly in relation to the spatial policies of the European Union. We conclude by arguing that a revised account of spatial justice, incorporating academic discussions on human capabilities and agency could

be formulated into a guiding principle for a new spatialisation of the European Social Model.

Reviewing the literature on spatial justice demonstrates that there have been two main periods of academic and policy engagement with the idea of spatial justice (see Fig. 2). The first period began in the late 1960s and the early 1970s, while the second happened in the new millennium. The first period is marked by the publication of certain seminal books applying the ideas of social justice to geographical thought and the latter period, from 2010 onwards, is characterised by almost an exponential increase in the volume of publications addressing spatial justice. One of the first popular entries for the concept of justice that uses a spatial referent was made by Davies (1968) who focused on assessing the distribution of local services with respect to the needs of designated service areas. A few years later, Lefebvre (1970) conceptualised in *La Révolution Urbaine* the fundamental political and social changes needed in order to secure a spatially just society. Lefebvre's definition of justice fundamentally relied on his notion of social transformation that manifests itself mainly in cities and the urban context. Harvey (1973, 306) emphasised the urban context even further by noting that the urban would not only serve as the culmination of the
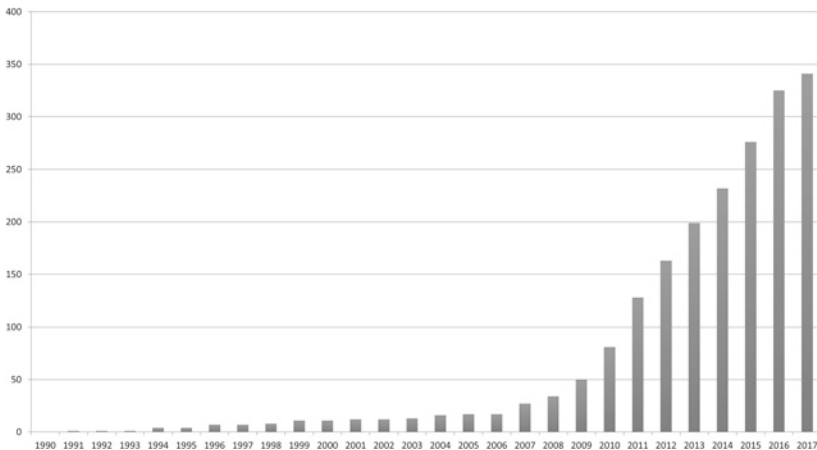

Fig. 2   The cumulative number of hits for the term 'spatial justice' on the basis of a Google Scholar search

spatial injustice that follows the capitalist mode of production but may be the starting point of its abolishment.

After this booming period at the turn of the 1970s, the literature on spatial justice was reinvigorated at the beginning of the 2010s as a result of the publication of books on *The Just City* by Fainstein (2010) and on *Seeking Spatial Justice* by Soja (2010; Barnett 2018). Fainstein approaches the idea of spatial justice from the perspective of urban planning and argues, inspired by Rawls (1971), for the consideration of at least three components of a just city, focusing on: first, the distributive aspect when stressing the need for material equality across space; second, the need for urban social life to be characterised by diversity; and third, the central role to be played by democracy in navigating potential social and spatial conflicts. In many respects, Soja (2010) echoes many of the points made by Fainstein and others. In his seminal book, Soja uses the struggle between the Bus Riders Union and the Metropolitan Transport Authority in Los Angeles as a case study in order to build a general argument about spatial rights and the processes that help to create spatial injustice in urban space.

A number of common themes arise in relation to these studies. First of all—and as can be seen from the above studies—there has been a sustained engagement with spatial justice through the lens of the city and the urban scale. Cities have been viewed as manifestations of the economic inequalities that characterise modern society, as well as acting as key sites within which alternative and just socio-spatial forms can be imagined. And yet, there is no necessary link between spatial justice and the urban scale. Merrifield and Swyngedouw (1997, 3), in this respect, criticise a prevailing static nature of the concept of spatial justice that does not take into account spatial, temporal and scalar differences. Soja (2010, 20), too, claims that "justice and injustice are infused into the multiscalar geographies in which we live, from the intimacies of the household to the uneven development of the global economy" (see also Israel and Frenkel 2017, 4). In short, we should not view spatial justice as something that is merely articulated through reference to the urban scale. At the same time, this does not mean that spatial justice plays out in exactly the same way at different scales. As such, we should also attend to the difference that scale might make to the forms and processes associated with spatial justice.

Second, authors writing on spatial justice draw attention to the way in which social and spatial forms of injustice can be linked to structural inequalities of different kinds. Dikeç (2001, 1793) conceptualises the relation between space and justice as fundamentally bound to stable structures. In his works on French urban policy, he contends that "institutional structures and practices that privilege competition, efficiency, and economic success" play a role in establishing the conditions under which neoliberalism may thrive (Dikeç 2006, 64). For him, spatial (in)justice cannot be attributed to specific acts but is the product of systematic exclusion and dominance (Dikeç 2001). Although writing from a different perspective, Young (2011, 52) too, has elaborated on notions of "structural injustice", which she claims to exist "when social processes put large groups of persons under systematic threat of domination or deprivation of the means to develop and exercise their capacities, at the same time that these processes enable others to dominate or to have a wide range of opportunities for developing and exercising capacities available to them". There is considerable merit to these kinds of approaches but there is a danger that they can also create a vision of injustice as something that lies beyond any kind of agency. If injustice is so structurally embedded, then how can individuals or agencies meaningfully seek to redress it through the promotion of policies or strategies based on ideas of spatial justice?

Third, various authors have used the idea of spatial justice, not surprisingly, as a means of charting the associations between social inequalities and geographical understandings of space. While Pirie (1983) has questioned the necessity of introducing a spatial point of reference to understandings of justice, others contend that space and justice are intertwined. Space, at one level, can be thought of as something that is reflective of inequalities and injustices. Landscapes represent one kind of material and symbolic representation of such injustices (Mitchell 2003, 788). At the same time, landscape does not just mirror social processes. Nor is landscape an enigmatic "palimpsest" (Sahr 2003, 21), a "spoor" (Mitchell 2003, 790) or even the "detritus" (ibid.) of social life. Landscapes, along with other kinds of spaces, are constitutive of inequalities and injustices. It is in this context that Dabinett (2011, 2391) has argued that we should avoid seeing space as merely being a

container for justice or, in other words, of spatial justice being "short-hand for social justice in space". Rather, we need to consider how space can influence forms of (in)justice in various far-reaching ways.

Fourth, research on spatial justice illustrates the need to consider the extent to which individuals and places of different kinds possess the rights, the capabilities or the capacity to be able to shape more just social and economic forms. Lefebvre and other "right to the city" scholars during the late 1960s and early 1970s, for instance, conceived of spatial justice as being "a right to/or access to" something. Lefebvre, in this respect, claimed that justice could not be reduced to access to resources but rather involved the right to take part in urban transformation processes. Justice, in this regard, implies "active participation in the political life, management and the administration of the city" (Dikeç 2001, 1790). In a more recent contribution, Israel and Frenkel (2017) have drawn on the capabilities approach of Sen (1993, 2009) in order to develop a notion of justice that derives from a "person's capabilities and his liberties" (Israel and Frenkel 2017, 2). And of course, it is possible to extend this notion of justice by viewing spatial justice as something that reflects a particular place's, locality's, region's or state's capabilities or liberties. It is in this context that ideas of political representation and capacity assume great significance.

Finally, work on spatial justice highlights the need to examine the pluralities of understandings of justice. While some universal goals—such as freedom, liberty and well-being—may be constant, authors such as Sen (2009) have argued that we should guard against presupposing a uniform notion of a perfectly just situation against which reality is to be measured. For example, Israel and Frenkel (2017) note that as no single definitive measure exists for justice, it should be assessed on the basis of individual opportunities in a given context. A more choice-centred understanding of what is fair and what may create well-being, therefore, needs to come into play (Sen 1993). And of course, this is not solely agent-centred but also place-centred. So, according to Storper (2011, 19), while "freedom and liberty; the ability to live our lives and be happy; and development of our capabilities" may well be common goals, "different individuals, groups and territories might fill in the detail on these goals in rather different ways".

Thinking about spatial justice in such plural ways also raises significant questions in relation to how we might go about measuring variations in justice and well-being; in ways that go beyond simple measures of GDP (Stiglitz et al. 2009).

Despite this rich and recently reinvigorated body of academic literature on spatial justice, its implications for EU policies relating to spatial inequalities, including territorial cohesion, have been underexplored to date. Part of the reason for this lack of engagement may well derive from the fact that academic discussions about spatial justice have mainly addressed the urban scale and, as such, have not found their way on to EU policy agendas operating mainly on a regional (or territorial) scale. But, as we have shown above, there are no a priori reasons why understandings of spatial justice should not be usefully applied at other scales, including those that are relevant to EU policies targeting spatial (in) equality.

In sum, we argue that the spatialisation of spatial justice in the name of territorial cohesion policy has remained partial. Influenced by the coupling of the European Social Model and the EU's global economic competitiveness in the early 2000s, EU's territorial cohesion policies have been far too strongly dominated by particular economic geographical discourses of growth and regional differentiation for well over a decade. As a result, there has been tendency for cohesion policies to focus almost invariably on regional disparities and regional competitiveness-related issues. But given that the emphasis on "regions" is one of the peculiarities of the EU as a polity, the small impact of scholarly work on urban spatial justice and injustice on cohesion policies may not come as a terrible revelation.

It is for the above-mentioned reasons that we proceed in the final section of this chapter to outline some potential benefits accruing from adopting a language of spatial justice as a way of thinking creatively and differently about the European Union's policies relating to spatial inequalities. We also provide a brief outline of a research project, with which we as authors are associated, that is examining the potential of using spatial justice as a way of developing new policy solutions to the entrenched socio-spatial inequalities that characterise contemporary Europe.

4   From Territorial Cohesion to Spatial Justice: A New Agenda for the Empowered Regions of the European Union?

While we do not believe that the notion of spatial justice will necessarily provide a panacea for addressing socio-spatial inequalities within Europe, we believe that it has the potential to explore other avenues and approaches that might prove to be more successful than those currently being used. First, we maintain that paying more attention to the concept of spatial justice can allow academics, policy-makers and the public alike to be enrolled more readily into regional coalitions of interest, capable of addressing inequalities. The discourse of justice is one that is meaningful and accessible to different stakeholders, and also allows connections to be made between demands for spatial justice and pre-existing struggles for other kinds of justice, whether in relation to the environment, gender and so on. It is a language and discourse, therefore, that have the potential to be flexible and inclusive, encompassing many different aspects of life and work. Using a discourse of spatial justice can also allow stakeholders within regions and beyond to coalesce around the delivery of a positive set of end goals instead of merely fighting against negative conditions. The discursive limitations of other alternative discourses are apparent when one thinks in such ways; it may be easier, for instance, to fight for justice than it is to fight for 'de-peripheralisation' or more even forms of development.

Second, using the concept of spatial justice can enable a more progressive discourse to emerge, which focuses on the capabilities of regions and territories to develop and succeed, rather than being a discourse that views regions and territories as ones that exist merely to receive financial and institutional support from others. Approaching spatial justice as something that is based on "right to" rather than "regional distribution of" would necessitate an alternative approach to reducing socio-spatial inequalities within Europe, one that would be less concerned with an interregional redistribution of economic resources than it would be with providing regions with the necessary capacity to shape their own socio-spatial futures. Viewing spatial justice in terms of

capabilities does not necessarily provide a simple solution to the challenges facing 'under-performing' regions. After all, creating additional capabilities among such regions—whether in terms of granting greater political power, increased capacity to tax and spend, or an increased ability to create new institutional fixes—is not always easy, especially if it involves a transfer of power from other polities. Nor will the various ways of increasing a region's capabilities, outlined above, necessarily lead to a situation in which such regions will be able to pursue their socio-economic goals more effectively. As we noted in the previous section, there are many structural factors that can impede the ability of a region to succeed, no matter how much capacity is devolved to that region. And yet, we believe that there is a value in focusing on the capabilities aspect of spatial justice and on its implications for the European Union's spatial policies, namely the way in which it refocuses the terms of the debate away from viewing regions as being almost helpless receivers of aid to being active shapers of their own socio-economic destinies.

Third, the use of the concept of spatial justice allows us to envisage how plural understandings of development, justice, well-being and the 'good life' might be developed, ones that are attuned to the regions and territories from which they emanate. The idea of capabilities and agency by Sen starts with an acknowledgement that justice and well-being manifest themselves differently in various spatial contexts. Engaging with spatial justice, therefore, does not force regions onto a single trajectory based on assumptions of a direct and linear relationship between economy and well-being. Rather, thinking in such ways opens up the possibility for different regions to develop alternative conceptions of what might constitute well-being for those individuals and groups living and working within those regions. Using spatial justice in such a way may also be less problematic as a normative policy aim than other alternatives such as assisting lagging regions so that they might "catch up" with the best-performing regions or the EU average.

While the above statements are tentative in nature, there is some limited evidence of how certain territories and regions in Europe are beginning to think in different ways about issues relating to development, justice and well-being. Recent attempts to develop inclusive and alternative visions of long-term sustainable futures in different parts of

Europe—for example, in relation to attempts to define the Wales we want (Jones and Ross 2016)—show how certain national and regional governments are seeking to develop dialogues with relevant stakeholders in order to create plural and long-term conceptions of 'development', 'well-being' and 'justice'. Although these conversations are in their early stages, they begin to illustrate the potential associated with engaging with notions of territorial inequality in different ways. These conversations have: (1) been focused around ideas of justice, well-being and sustainable development, precisely because these concepts have provided a language around which different stakeholders have been able to coalesce; (2) asserted that there is a need for states and regions to use their own capacity to define their vision of long-term futures that are characterised by well-being and justice; and (3) articulated visions of long-term futures that reflect the specific priorities that exist within their own territories and populations. There is some scope, we suggest, for the European Union to harness these emerging attempts to define long-term future visions of social and spatial justice as part of its potential attempts to address spatial inequalities.

Of course, the above suggestions are, at present, rather speculative in nature. There is a need to conduct research on the potential for these ideas to deliver a more progressive and successful future for various regions in Europe. As we noted earlier, the authors of this chapter are all involved in a multi-partner and inter-disciplinary research project, funded as part of the Horizon 2020 programme, which is examining the role that ideas of spatial justice might play in understanding and challenging socio-spatial inequalities in Europe (http://imajine-project. eu). The project is: (1) examining conceptual approaches to understanding inequalities in contemporary Europe; (2) developing more detailed ways of mapping different kinds of inequality; (3) charting the challenges facing different regions in relation to service delivery; (4) interrogating the link between socio-spatial inequalities and migration at different scales; (5) examining the connection between inequalities and political representation and mobilisation; and (6) working with various stakeholders to enable them to imagine alternative futures for their regions. While the project is in its early stages, our hope is that it will contribute in far-reaching ways to academic understandings of spatial

justice, as well as allowing us to contribute to emerging debates within various European institutions about the potential policy benefits associated with an engagement with spatial justice.

Evidently, there is a real need to engage effectively with such issues. Even if what one may term the golden years of European-level discourses of territorial cohesion may well be on the wane, there is an urgent need for a new round of cohesion policies to address the politics of austerity, the rise of right-wing populism in Europe, and a deepening of the legitimacy crisis of the European Union. And yet, our argument in this chapter is that there may be useful alternatives to the previous rounds of territorial cohesion policies, which might help to spatialise the European Union's Social Model in more effective ways, thus contributing more directly to the well-being and welfare of people in various parts of Europe. We contend that the academic literatures on spatial justice, human capabilities and agency point to one potentially fruitful way of achieving these goals.

Note

1. However, it should be mentioned that spatial justice arguments have also been applied in diverse ways to racial or environmental justice literatures at widely differing geographical scales. Nonetheless, the geographical literature on spatial justice has tended to focus either implicitly or explicitly on the urban scale.

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