

THE 'HIDDEN GEOGRAPHY' IN THE EU POLICYMAKING

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the role and influence of Geography and Geographers in the European Union (EU) policymaking process. On top of this, it both adds to the perennial debate of the 'utility role' of Geography in policymaking, and the concerns in concentrating geographical analysis in more relevant and practical issues for designing, implementing, and evaluating public policies. Furthermore, it sheds some light on the Geographer's influence in the EU mainstream development strategies and policies. This article finds that there is, in fact, a 'hidden Geography' within the EU policymaking. Hidden because of the reduced presence and influential role of Geographers in the design of the EU mainstream development strategies and policies. Still, we find with a somewhat translucent and peripheral presence in the existing EU territorial analysis missions, like the ESPON programme.

Keywords: Geography, European Union, Territorial Cohesion, ESPON, Territorial Impact Assessment.

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RESUMO

A 'geografia escondida' no processo de formulação de políticas da União Europeia. Este artigo investiga o papel e as influências da Geografia e dos Geógrafos no processo de formulação de políticas da União Europeia (UE). Em larga medida, esta análise reforça uma posição crítica de se dar mais importância ao papel utilitário da análise geográfica, e de esta se focar em processos mais relevantes e práticos de implementação e avaliação de políticas públicas. Em acréscimo, levanta o véu sobre a influência dos geógrafos no desenho das principais políticas e estratégias de desenvolvimento da UE. Em suma, conclui-se que existe uma 'Geografia Escondida' no processo de formulação de políticas da UE. Escondida, dado que a influência da Geografia e dos Geógrafos é muito limitada nesse processo. Contudo, é possível descortinar a sua presença, embora ténue, em análises territoriais que advêm sobretudo da implementação do Programa ESPON.

Palavras-chave: Geografia, União Europeia, Coesão Territorial, ESPON, Avaliação de Impactos Territoriais.

1. INTRODUCTION

Geography is beautiful. So is 'small', according to Schumacher (2010). At the very least, Geography is not small. Not for Geographers, I am sure. Notwithstanding, the general view is that, in certain key state and international institutional organizations, like the European Union (EU), Geographers are not the dominant species, and therefore lack critical influence in determining policy mainstream intervention strategies and policies. Then, who is to blame? One line of reasoning puts Geographers as the main culprits for being locked in relative and disperse pools of non-relevant scientific analysis, which hardly contributes to both the design and implementation of concrete development policies, and to improve the population living standards directly: the discipline usefulness and relevancy view (see Martin, 2001; Dorling and Shaw, 2002).

Indeed, this is not a recent and innocuous discussion as, by mid 1990s, Geographers were already finding a hard time in getting a secured and well-paid job position, at least, in my country. For the most part, they ended up by becoming Geography teachers, in basic and secondary schools. To pep up this scenario, some others tried their luck in getting a position in certain public entities, either related with

spatial planning and/or GIS related tasks (in municipalities and state departments), or with physical Geography related lines of work (meteorology and risk prevention, for instance). In almost every way, the mitigated impact of Geographers on the public policy realm could be (and still is) seen in several prisms.

For one, at the government level, from what we were informed, a typical secretary of state of spatial planning, if he/she exists, does not necessarily have a Geography academic degree. Moreover, in our country, state departments with responsibilities over territorial planning have been mostly dominated by economists, including the one created specifically to manage and monitor the EU funds. On the positive side, at the regional level, the administrative structures with the goal to promote regional planning have a good share of Geographers in their staff mix. The same is true at the municipal (local) level, as spatial planning departments admittedly are aware of the need to make a good use of Geographers and their knowledge, in implementing local and regional development strategies, and in preparing spatial plans.

In sum, this introduction intended to highlight the diversity of cases and possibilities when one analyses the Geographer's influence in policymaking, and their influence in improving people's lives. Consequently, definite conclusions are difficult to draw in this discussion, as these influences differ over time and place. Further, this influence is dynamic, as it depends on a myriad of factors, which do not necessarily rest upon the Geographer's role. Even so, along this paper we argue that the Geographers can have an important role when it comes to increasing their position as main drivers of development policies design, implementation, and evaluation, namely within the EU. Currently, however, it goes without saying that it is difficult to dispute the argument that professional classes, such as economists and lawyers, have a much wider influence in determining public policies than Geographers, not only at the national level, but also at supranational levels: as in the EU and the United Nations, to name a few mainstream entities. But why is that so? As some would argue: 'it's the economy, stupid'... Instead, Martin (2001) identifies several other causes for this little relative policy influence from Geographers:

- The lack of adequate publicity of the Geographer's work amongst policymakers;
- The lack of confidence and self-assurance when compared with other social sciences colleagues (mainly economists);
- The lack of pertinence of a significant part of produced geographical analysis to policymaking issues;
- The lack of a readily discernible policy research agenda in the discipline;
- The lack of practical relevance for policy from what is now regarded as front-line research in Geography;
- The lack of political commitment;
- The retreat from empirical and explanatory rigour;
- The tendency to over theorize and produce superficial empirical enquires.

Whatever the cause(s), I find it difficult to disagree with this author when he refers that "the impact of Geography on the public policy realm has in general been disappointingly limited", and that Geographers "exert so little policy influence" (Martin, 2001, p.191) when compared with many other professional classes. In order to improve the organization of this discussion, this paper is structured in four main topics, and a conclusion. In the first topic, I develop a brief discussion on the myriad of areas analysed by Geographers, as possible causes to the lack of relevance they have to policymaking. The following two topics are focused on the discussion about the degree of influence from Geographers and Geography worldwide, and within the EU, in designing development strategies and policies. Finally, the last topic is then dedicated to reflecting on the unexplored potential to expand the Geographers and geographical analysis' influence within the existing EU strategies and policies.

2. GEOGRAPHY: A SCIENCE OF EVERYTHING?

Ever since I started lecturing Economic Geography, I have taken the opportunity to enquire the students about what is the central concept of Geography. The basic idea

is to spark a debate on the importance of the concept of 'Territory' within geographical analysis. In this regard, a 'remarkable economist in love with geographical analysis' (Prof. Roberto Camagni), when recently invited to give a lecture in my University, shed some light on the crucial role of south Europeans in putting this concept in the centre of the EU discourse, by gradually replacing the Anglo-Saxon frequent use of the term 'space', in the EU agenda. Yes, territorial analysis is not an exclusive domain of Geographers and Geography. Indeed, most often, such type of analysis is done by economists (mostly), and other social science related researchers. A somewhat awkward explanation for this could be attributed to a certain lack of interest shown by some Geographers in focusing specifically on territorial related analysis. Indeed, in our opinion, the perennial tendency of Geographers to be swamped by forces of thematic dispersion should not undermine the constant awareness of placing territorial analysis as the central thematic goal in both human and in physical Geography.

It is nevertheless true that territorial analysis has both a general, widespread, and holistic perspective, as it quite often requires, for instance, information related with the economy, the society, the governance, the urban system arrangements, and the environmental aspects associated with a given territory. On the other side, when used on a more detailed level, geographical analysis could require the gathering of detailed data associated with a stark range of themes (demography, migrations, policy analysis, culture, agriculture, education, health, labour markets, tourism, science and technology, transports, cities, etc.), which are already deeply scrutinised by other established sciences. In a way, this wide scope of analysis can be seen both as strength and as a weakness of Geography. A strength since it absorbs valid and extensive knowledge, while interrelating it with a myriad of many other sciences: Geology, Meteorology, Biology, Planning, Economy, History, Anthropology, Sociology, Statistics, Math, Computer Science, and Engineering, among others (in this regard see a comprehensive relational graphic in Haggett, (2001, p.766)). A weakness, as it dilutes the focus on 'pure territorial analysis', and therefore facilitates the 'intromission' of other social sciences in this scientific domain, as they realise the existence on uncharted research territory.

Curiously, Haggett (2001, p. 765), while recognizing that "Geography is particularly dependent on the flow of concepts and techniques from more specialized sciences", proposes a division of three main geographical approaches: one of them being focused on 'spatial analysis' (locational variation, patterns of distribution), and the remaining on 'ecological analysis' (interrelates human and environmental variables) and on 'regional complex analysis' (a combination of spatial and ecological analysis). In this regard, I rather adopt a more simplified approach, by claiming that Geography is a science which focuses on territorial analysis, with the goal to better understand the Earth and Human related processes, and their relevance, evolution and potential impacts on a given territory. As Bonnett (2008, p. 1) puts it, "Geography is about the world. To study Geography is to study the world, both near and far". Under this rationale, geographic analysis should provide guidance on how to improve the quality of life for the humanity, while safeguarding our planet. Indeed, the simplistic view in which Geography is the 'science that deals with the distribution and arrangement of all elements of the earth's surface' (Encarta, 2009), constrains its policy relevance.

Specifically, as Cloke *et al.*, (2005, p. x1) argue,

"Human Geographers are concerned with how we live on and with our planet, and the 'environments' and 'natures' it provides for us. With how we impact with those environments and how they impact on us; with how we understand the value of them; and how we relate to our own natures and our existence as a part of the natural world."

All of these are crucial aspects which could contribute to improve policymaking processes. In this regard, geographical analysis (in the Human Geography field) can have a pivotal role in policies be directly concerned with the promotion of territorial development, territorial planning, and/or territorial cohesion. Beyond this, 'territorial analysis' encompasses a range of geographical scales. Without going into great detail, normally, geographical analysis can be extended from the local to a worldwide scale. The local scale might refer to a street in an urban settlement, a neighbourhood, a locality or a municipality. But here, a critical element is the lack of a common

agreement on the area size in which geographical analysis should start. Be that as it may, one thing seems clear: the limit to Geographical analysis is the planetary scale. Beyond that, astronomy takes its role in producing 'scientific analyses'.

Whatever the selected scale(s) of analysis, the most important conclusion of this short discussion is that Geography has the potential to be of vital importance to policymaking, as the cornerstone science of territorial development and planning. At the very least, this could justify the presence and central role of Geographers in decision-making structures, at all administrative levels. Too often, this is not the case. In this regard, this paper aims to shed some light in the position of Geography and Geographers within the process of EU territorial development strategies and policy design, implementation, and evaluation. Understandably, and despite the controversy around this discussion, we make no secret of our position as defenders of the need to place Geographers and geographical analysis in the frontline of policy design and monitoring, namely when these policies aim at promoting territorial development and planning. Yet, here, Geographers could also bear in mind on the need to engage their research on more practical, useful, and contemporary issues, which could greatly improve the efficiency and effectiveness of policies in promoting more developed, planned, and cohesive territories.

Alongside, Geographers have a pivotal role in feeding the recent academic fascination with policy evaluation, by designing and making use of policy evaluation techniques, such as the Territorial Impact Assessment (TIA) tools (see Medeiros, 2013, 2014a), when evaluating sectoral policies with a clear territorial dimension, or projects/programmes/policies which have a potential to affect most dimensions of territorial development. While this policy evaluation process has enjoyed a notable progress, the prevailing fussiness on the notions of territorial cohesion and territorial development continue to require a clarification by Geographers, forcing them to robust their practical knowledge on the scientific domain of territorial development and planning, and not merely in social related issues, as Martin (2001, p. 202) suggests. Such a stance intends to give wider relevance to geographical analysis, in not only providing more meaningful and interesting insights to the ongoing processes and

trends in the surface of the earth, but also to concretely provide a scientific background to improve the processes of territorial development, following a sustainable, balanced and inclusive perspective. The emergence of this realization, in which geography matters (see Hinde, 2015), is reinforced by the fact that economists all too rarely take the spatial dimension very much seriously (Stutz and Warf, 2012).

As such, this need for an 'updated contribution' from Geographers in yielding 'policy-relevant research' could be provided not only in a practical manner (leading task groups in designing, implementing and assessing policies), but also on a more theoretical stance (by producing more robust and updated methodologies). As Martin (2001, p. 203) highlights,

"We need more interesting and imaginative ways of combining qualitative and quantitative analysis, and of integrating intuition into our research methodologies and analyses. Above all, for a policy turn to occur in the discipline, our research has to become much more 'action based'. We need to see research not simply as a mechanism for studying and explaining change, but – by following our investigations through to their implications for possible policy intervention and action – as an instigator of change, as an activist endeavour".

To their credit, many Human Geographers continue to produce studies that offer extremely useful methodological insights in shaping and improving the design and monitoring of public policies (see, for instance, Florida, 2011). But in fact, what have Human Geographers been doing in recent times? According to Ward (2005, p. 312), there is an inclination to pay particular attention to the 'cultural', 'institutional', and 'relational' turns of the discipline, although not exclusively. A brief overview of some recent Human Geography mainstream publications illustrates this prolific knowledge dispersion of geographical analysis (Table 1).

Moreover, if one looks upon all the volumes of a well-known International Encyclopedia of Human Geography, this dispersal metaphor is even more marked. As their editors eloquently contend, modern Human Geography is not only focused on using a spatial lens in analysing social, economic, political, cultural or environmental

processes - which work within and between places - but also "has developed into a diverse collection of sophisticated, spatially inflected knowledges underpinned by a refined set of theoretical concepts and methodological tools" (Kitchin and Thrift, 2009, pp. ix xv-ix xvii).

Figure 1 – Word Clouds from the keywords in published articles in the first half of 2014, in high impact factor Human Geography journals. Source: Author's own elaboration.

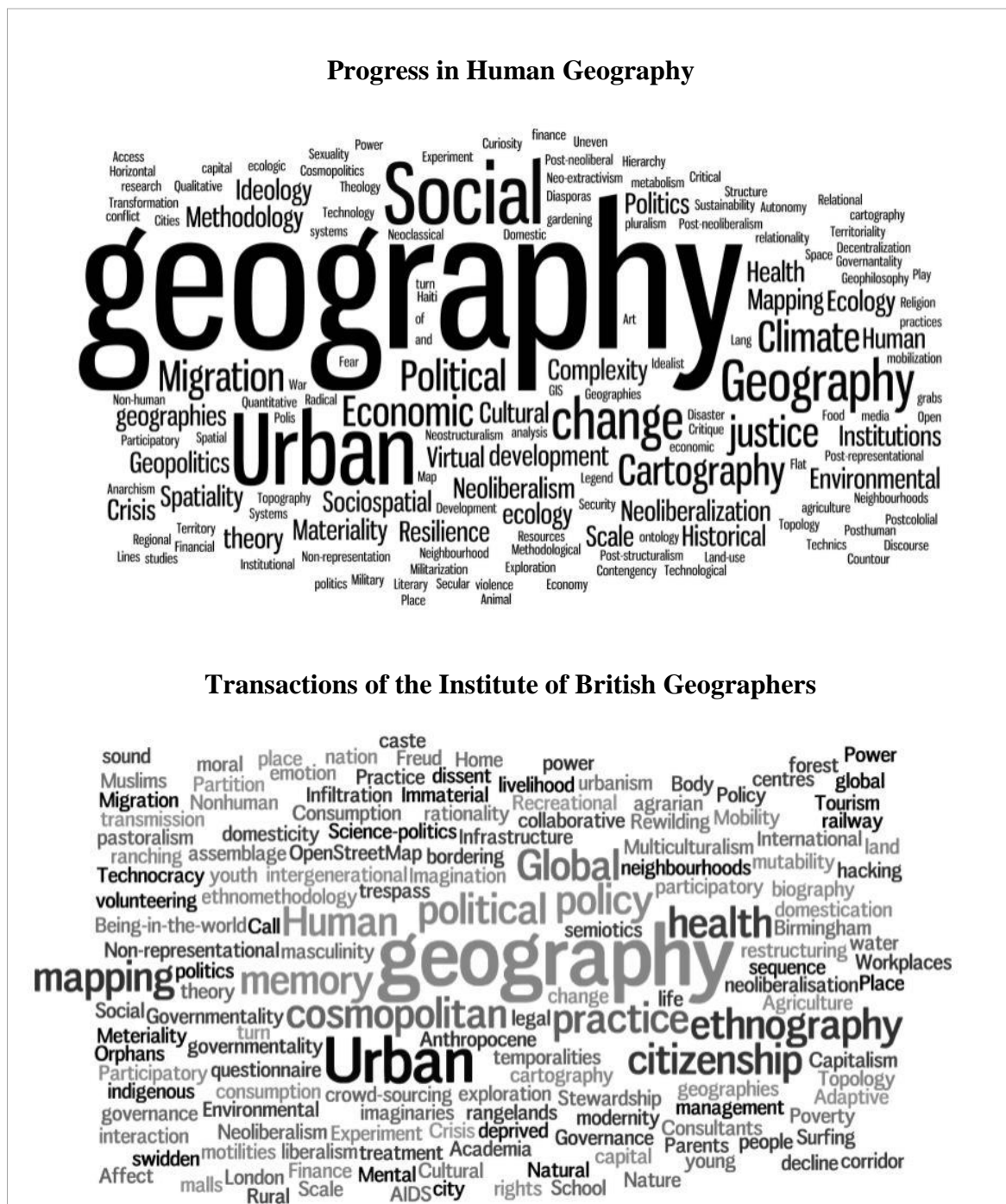


Table 1 – Mainstream Themes of Human Geography in several encyclopaedia-type publications.

Source: Cloke et al. (2005), Daniels et al. (2012) e Haggett (2001). Author's compilation.

Main Theme	Related Issues
Cultural Geographies	Culture, Landscapes
Development Geographies	Theories of development, Resilience, Globalization
Economic Geographies	Production, Consumption, Resources, Commerce
Historical Geographies	Heritage, Colonialism, Modernity
Social Geographies	Identity, Exclusion, Society, Inequalities
Migration Geographies	Tourism, Migration
Demographic Geographies	Population dynamics
Urban Geographies	Urbanization, Settlement
Rural Geographies	Rural World
Regional Geographies	Region, Border Areas, Macro Regions
Network Geographies	Networks, Nodes, Hierarchies, Spatial diffusion
Political Geographies	Territoriality, Geopolitics
Environmental Geographies	Environmental Sustainability, Human footprint
Mapping Geographies	GIS, Maps

To go a bit further in this research, we decided to put together all the keywords of all the papers published in 2014 (first half) of the two Human Geography journals with the higher impact factor: Progress in Human Geography and Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers. The obtained word clouds (Figure 1) prove this 'probably excessive' analytic thematic dispersal in human geographical analysis, in present times. Curiously, by the 1970s, Human Geography was more focused in influencing and shaping the formation and evaluation of policy than in present times (Ward, 2007, p. 698).

3. GEOGRAPHY AND ITS INFLUENCE IN DESIGNING DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES?

In an ever more globalized world, the territorial (urban, local, regional, national, and European) development strategies tend to absorb and follow knowledge and directives from institutional macro-structures of the global economy (see Dicken, 2011). Generally, European countries, for instance, have been particularly permeable to policy influences from the OECD (The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) and the EU development strategies (the 'EUization' process – see Smith,

2013). Here, the question remains: what is the influence of the geographical knowledge in the design of the mainstream development strategies proposed by these supra-national entities, and the national ones? In this regard, we are aware of the multitude of scenarios that differ from place to place. Even so, it is hard to deny the somewhat excessive weight of the 'economist perspective' in the narrative of such development strategies (the growth vision), vis-à-vis a more holistic and geographical perspective in taking into account all the dimensions of territorial development (the development or/and cohesion vision). Yes, it is true that the OECD produces 'territorial reviews', many of which with quite interesting, useful, and valid analysis. Yet, a more detailed reading unveils a torrent of economic and econometric perspectives, while neglecting fundamental areas of territorial analysis related to spatial planning, as an example. This systematic approach is probably the result of the reduced presence of Geographers in the OECD research units. Indeed, a brief look upon the 'current vacancies' link in their official webpage is conclusive on the organization's interest in hiring economists, junior economists, and statisticians, on a regular basis.

Also, within the EU institutions, and more specifically in the European Commission (EC), the European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO) opens competitions to hire personnel regularly. A succinct observation over the main chased-after academic qualifications in these competitions puts language translators/interpreters, and economists (namely with specialization in financial or macro-econometrics issues), at the frontline of the most requested qualifications. Once again, this vicious cycle of highlighting the need for the economic theory is taking its toll on several other sciences, including Geography. In a prism, this could explain the constant shift of the most financed EU Policy (Cohesion Policy) from the initial 'cohesion' into a more recent 'growth' paradigm, alongside the political and economic context. But even outside these 'policy-influential supra-national entities', and more specifically in the 'academic world', there is a wide perception of the superimposing economical influential effects on policymaking, which are also absorbed by the bulk of the Economic Geographers (see Martin, 2001, p. 198). Further, it also has become a common place to see a depressing absence of Geographers/Geography when lists of top and renowned

intellectuals are produced (Ward, 2006, p. 495). This goes to show how little influence and recognition they have on the academic world, and consequently on changing our society. But is that so?

When it comes to the national level, we can only express our opinion from what we have been observing in our own country. All told, the Geographer's presence is especially strong in teaching, although their numbers have been growing in planning departments of municipal, and regional public entities, and in consulting private entities, where they mostly work on GIS, policy evaluation, planning, and demographic studies (Salgueiro, 2013). At another level, interestingly enough, the editorial board of the National Geographic Magazine, published in our country, does not include a single Geographer...

Anyhow, as in most situations, not all is negative when it comes to the role of Geographers in influencing policymaking. Take the case of Richard Florida, who became world famous after the publication of 'The Rise of the Creative Class', in 2001, which saw an updated version ten years afterwards (Florida, 2011). Overall, Florida's work has become an inspiration for many local (city mayors), and regional politicians, in order to increase the attractiveness of their governed territories. This goal implied concrete measures in improving the quality of the place of many cities, which had the potential, at least, to provide several positive effects in the quality of life of the local populations. Despite Florida's worldwide recognition, his name is not even included in the 100 topmost list of scientific authors², and the top 100 global thinkers³. Then again, as Dorling and Shaw (2002) assert

"We would argue that it is difficult to produce a list of Geographers that could be held up to the light of the policy achievements of academics from disciplines such as sociology, politics and economics. [...] What has surprised us is the extent to which Geographers will offer up a list of names of Geographers, without any reference to how poor their contribution looks in the light of other disciplines".

² See <http://scholarometer.indiana.edu/explore.html>.

³ See <https://gt.foreignpolicy.com/2017/?178149b9c5=&c0244ec121>.

Such somewhat negative perspectives on the influences of Geography are not consensual. Interestingly, Warf and Arias (2009, p. 1) contend that Human Geography, in particular, “has transformed into one of the most dynamic, innovative and influential of the social sciences”, and that it “has moved decisively from being an importer of ideas from other fields to an exporter, and Geographers are increasingly being read by scholars in the humanities and other social sciences”. What is hard to demonstrate is that this potential increase of interest in the Geographer’s work has had concrete effects in influencing the design of public development strategies and policies.

Another fundamental question: how is this potential ‘spatial or territorial turn’ in other social sciences stronger than the ‘spatial or territorial thematic dispersion’ observed in Geography? Fundamental because, in our understanding, Geography has limited chances in influencing other sciences without a strong thematic identity. In this regard, Livingstone (2009, p. 2) puts it best when he affirms that “Geographers, despite their professional stake in matters of place and location, have been inclined to exempt science from the imperatives of spatial significance”. What is unquestionable, however, is the rise of the Geographies of Science, where geographical analysis is growing its importance in better understanding the effects of spatial disparities (Meusburger et al., 2010), and the territorial changes of several phenomena, like the contemporary ‘climate change discussion’. For some, Geography, as a science, has experienced a path from “an intellectual vacuum, sealed off from external economic, social, political or cultural forces” into a less introspective and self-serving science (Hefferman, 2009, p. 4). If true, this is a positive sign, and goes against the legendary Yves Lacoste rational in which Geography is, first and foremost, a science for warfare (Bowda and Clayton, 2010), while closing in on the Doreen Massey celebrated expression in which ‘Geography Matters’ (Massey and Allen, 1984). Certainly, as Bonnett (2008, p. 6) concludes “Geography is an attempt to find and impose order on a seemingly chaotic world”. More broadly, Peet (1989) brings to the fore a common expression in which ‘Geography is what Geographers do’.

No less important, is the role of Geography in the promotion of civic awareness in a multi-scalar context, and in awakening the citizens critical consciousness, and not

only as vehicle to design and implement spatial planning procedures, as Gaspar (2013) eloquently portends. On closer inspection, both these ultimate goals (spatial planning and civic awareness) are closely interlocked with the supreme desire to better understand and positively shape the world we are living in, and to stimulate a 'territorial culture', as Ferrão (2011) puts it. Under this view, Geography should not necessarily be seen as a science of everything. Rather, it should be increasingly regarded as a crucial tool for influencing policymaking in strategic development design and planning, with a strong involvement from citizens and stakeholders.

4. GEOGRAPHY, GEOGRAPHERS AND THE EU POLICIES AND STRATEGIES: A SECLUDED INFLUENCE?

According to Dühr *et al.* (2010, p. 1) the influence of the EU on the territorial development of its Member-States and regions has been increasing over time. This conclusion can be witnessed by looking at the national spatial plans and territorial development strategies, which have gradually been absorbing practices and preferences generated within the EU governance system. On many occasions, this 'EUization' process is not only materialized by the mere 'absorption' of such EU practices and preferences, but is also extensive to their 'accommodation' and further 'transformation' of the previously existing national and regional policies and strategies, related to territorial planning and development processes (see Bache, 2008).

This EU influence on national spatial planning and development practices is actually remarkable, taken into consideration that the EU has not a formal competence for implementing spatial planning procedures within its Member States (Ferrão, 2003, 2010; Faludi, 2010). Even so, this influence is transmitted indirectly, both by the implementation of EU financed policies such as the EU Cohesion Policy - which tend to follow the EU periodical development strategies, like the Lisbon (EC, 2006) and the Europe 2020 (COM(2010) 2020 final) strategies - and by the adoption of proposals expressed in documents like the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP - EC, 1999) and the Territorial Agendas (EC, 2007, 2011), not to mention several EC Green

(territorial cohesion) and White papers (transports and governance). Further, thousands of spatial planning professionals “are now routinely involved in the European dimension of spatial development and planning, mostly in cooperation with colleagues in other countries”, while the “introductions to EU policies and actions are now commonly taught in many universities courses” (Dühr, 2010, p. 1). Undeniably, and following from what we were previously told, and from our professional experience, the construction of the EU project has increasingly attracted interest from the discipline of Geography and the Geographers community all over Europe. More specifically, Master Degrees on European Studies are well spread within a myriad of EU Universities (Table 2), and several disciplines in Bachelor degrees also cover the thematic of European Union political interventions, one way or the other.

Table 2 - Examples of European related studies in EU Universities. Source: Institutions Internet Pages. Author’s compilation.

Country/City	Institution	Course
Portugal/Lisbon	Institute of Geography and Spatial Planning - Lisbon University	MD - European Policies
Spain/Madrid	Complutense University of Madrid	MD - European Union and the Mediterranean
France/Paris	Centre for Europe -Sciences Po Paris	MD - European Affairs
Germany/Berlin	Humboldt University Berlin	MD - European Studies
UK/London	Oxford University	BD - European Politics and Society
Ireland/Dublin	School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies	BD - European Studies
Belgium/Brussels	Institute for European Studies - Vrije Universiteit Brussel	MD - European Integration
Holland/Amsterdam	University of Amsterdam	MD - European Studies: European Policy
Luxembourg/Luxembourg	University of Luxembourg	MD - European Governance
Italy/Rome	LUISS School of Government	MD - European Studies
Austria/Vienna	Institute of European Studies - University of Vienna	MD - European Studies
Denmark/Copenhagen	University of Copenhagen	MD - European Studies
Sweden/Gothenburg	University of Gothenburg	MD - European Studies
Finland/Helsinki	University of Helsinki	MD - European Studies
Poland/Warsaw	University of Warsaw	MD - European Interdisciplinary Studies
Hungary/Budapest	Central European University (CEU)	MD - International Relations and European Studies
Czech Republic/Prague	Faculty of Social Sciences - Charles University	MD - European Studies
Slovakia/Bratislava	Institute of European Studies and International Relations - Comenius University	BD - European Institutions
Romania/Bucharest	University of Bucharest	MD - European Studies
Bulgaria/Sofia	University of Sofia	BD - European Studies
Estonia/Tallinn	University of Tallinn	MD - International Relations in European-Asian Studies
Latvia/Riga	University of Riga	MD - European Studies

(*) BD - Bachelor Degree; MD - Master Degree.

Moreover, a cursory glance over the Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP) members list⁴ is illustrative of the networking facilitation in debating and transmitting spatial planning practices, within the EU territory, which cannot be detached from what is being proposed by the mainstream EU documents on this matter. Alongside, and in a synthetic manner, the Geography/Geographers potential influence in the EU agenda, although extensive, can be exerted in four mainstream arenas:

- a. EU main policies: with particular relevance for the EU Cohesion Policy and the Common Agriculture Policy. In the former, the regional operational programmes touch about all the areas of territorial development and have, in many countries, tremendous budgetary influences in their regional development policies. In addition, EU investments in areas such as basic infrastructural endowments, and in human capital improvement, amongst many other territorial development dimensions and components, have provoked direct and indirect positive impacts in the development of many EU regions (see EC, 2014).
- b. EU Sectoral policies with explicit spatial dimension: such policies include transports, environment, maritime issues, competition and common fisheries policies, for instance (see: EC, 2010). Yet, in our view, the transport policy is the one where Geographers can/should have a more prominent role. More concretely, they should have a key-role in defining the best possible ways to direct such type of transport infrastructural investments in order to better balance the EU territory, so that the EU Territorial Cohesion goal is achieved.
- c. EU global development strategies: the most recent EU strategies (Lisbon, Stockholm and Europe 2020) all had a profound effect on the distribution and concentration of the EU funds across Member States, namely in such areas as innovation, environmental sustainability, and smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, respectively. In the end, all of these components are

⁴ See http://www.aesop-planning.eu/en_GB/members-directory.

essential to define sound policies of territorial development. Hence, Geographers, right from the start, could have a saying in the draw of such strategies, as Geography has a fundamental focus on development issues.

- d. EU territorial development reports: from the Torremolinos Charter in 1983 (see Costa, 2005), to the latest Territorial Agenda (EC, 2011), including the key-spatial planning EU document (ESDP), quite many studies were produced with the goal of overseeing the main aspects of the EU territorial planning and development process: Europe 2000 (EC, 1991), Europe 2000+ (EC, 1994), the first Territorial Agenda (EC, 2007), and the Green paper on Territorial Cohesion (EC, 2008). In 2002, the ESPON (European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion) programme had its start, and provoked a profound effect in putting territorial analysis in the European research agenda. Regarding the latter, as its name suggests, it should be a preferential arena for the Geographer's research, due to the need for a robust geographical analysis of all themes discussed within the ESPON projects.

Interestingly, a brief overview of the presence degree of geographical analysis and geographical related Research Centers in the published projects, financed under the auspices of the first two ESPON programme generations (2002-2006 and 2007-2013), points out to the following generic conclusions:

- (i) in both cases the presence of Geography is high;
- (ii) the second programme saw a reduction of this presence in both elements; and
- (iii) some reports opened new horizons to a wider presence of geographical analysis within the EU policies evaluation procedures (Table 3).

On a different angle, a careful reading of Figure 2 presents a simplified picture of the relationship between the potential role of Geography and the role of

Geographers in crucial areas of study associated with the territorial dimension, policies with clear territorial dimension, and mainstream EU territorial reports and development strategies.

Table 3 – Presence level of Geography analysis/ Geographical related (urban and regional) Research Centres in the ESPON Projects. Source: Several ESPON reports. Author's compilation.

ESPON 2006	ANA	RES	ESPON 2013	ANA	RES
1.1.1 – Polycentricity	H	H	ARTS	H	H
1.1.2 – Urban-Rural	H	H	ATTREG	H	M
1.1.3 – Enlargement and Polycentrism	H	H	Climate	H	M
1.1.4 – Demographic Trends	H	L	DEMIFER	H	M
1.2.1 – Transport Trends	H	L	ECR2	H	H
1.2.2 – Telecom Trends	H	M	EDORA	M	M
1.2.3 – Information Society	M	H	ESaTDOR	H	H
1.3.1 – Natural hazards	H	H	ET2050	M	M
1.3.2 – Natural heritage	M	L	EU-LUPA	H	M
1.3.3 – Cultural heritage	H	L	FOCI	H	H
1.4.1 – Small and Medium Cities	H	H	GEOSPECS	H	M
1.4.2 – Social dimension	H	H	GREECO	H	M
1.4.3 – Urban Functions	H	H	ITAN	H	M
1.4.4 – Flows	H	H	KIT	H	M
1.4.5 – Tourism	H	M	ReRisk	H	M
2.1.1 – Transport Policy Impact	H	M	SeGI	H	H
2.1.2 – R&D policy Impact	H	L	SGPTD	H	H
2.1.3 – CAP Impact	H	M	SIESTA	H	M
2.1.4 – Energy	H	M	TANGO	M	H
2.1.5 – Fisheries	H	M	TERCO	H	M
2.2.1 – Structural Funds	H	H	TIGER	H	M
2.2.2 – Pre-Accession Aid	H	H	TIPSE	H	M
2.2.3 – Structural Funds	L	M	TIPTAP	H	M
2.3.1 – ESDP Impact	H	H	TOWN	H	M
2.3.2 – Governance	H	H	TRACC	H	M
2.4.1 – Environment	H	M	ADES	M	L
2.4.2 – Zoom in	H	H	AMCER	L	L
3.1 – Coordination	H	H	BEST METRO	H	H
3.2 – Scenarios	H	H	CAEE	H	L
3.3 – Lisbon Strategy	H	H	EATIA	L	L
3.4.1 – Europe in the World	H	M	EUROISLANDS	H	M
3.4.2 – Economy	M	H	GROSEE	H	M
3.4.3 – MAUP	H	H	KITCASP	H	M
4.1.3 – ESPON key indicators	H	H	LIVELAND	M	M
<div> ANA - Geo Analysis RES - Research Centres Presence level H – High M – Medium L- Low </div>			LP3LP	M	L
			METROBORDER	H	M
			NSS	M	M
			POLYCE	H	L
			PURR	L	M
			RISE	M	H
			SEMIGRA	H	M
			SMART-IST	L	M
			SS-LR	H	M
			SURE	L	H
			TEDI	H	M
			TPM	H	H
			TranSMEC	L	L
			ULYSSES	H	L

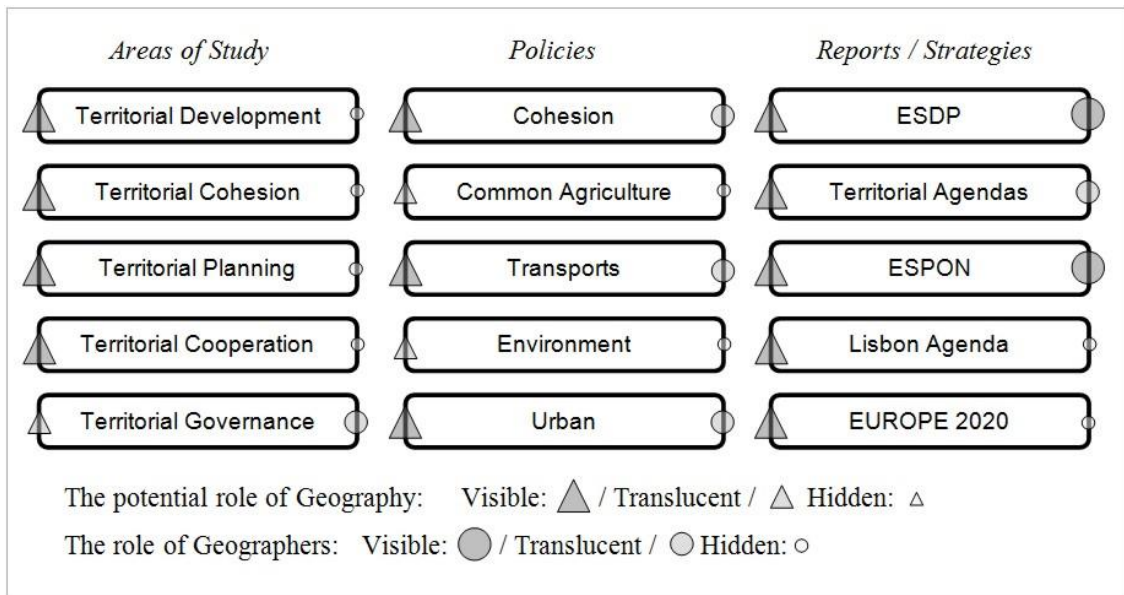


Figure 2 – EU policymaking and the role of Geography/Geographers within EU institutions.

Source: Author's own elaboration.

In this regard, no official information was provided by the EU institutions on the number and role of the Geographers involved on their activities. As a consequence, we base the information on inside privileged contacts, which most probably are no so far from the reality. With this in mind, the following general conclusion can be drawn:

- Geography has a wide potential to shed knowledge on several areas of study related with the EU policymaking process, and specifically in the design of territorial development, cohesion, planning, and cooperation strategies. However, the effective role of Geographers in this process is still far from the desirable one;
- Geographical analysis is of the essence when pivotal EU policies, such as the EU Cohesion Policy, are designed, implemented and evaluated, together with several EU sectoral policies. In this regard, the role of Geographers is less invisible. Yet still, is mostly focused on the use of GIS tools, and not so much on policy design and evaluation, namely when there is a need to make use of territorial impact assessment (TIA) tools;

- The role of Geographers is far more visible when it comes to the elaboration of key reports on the EU spatial planning reports, and the Territorial Agendas. Yet, they bring their knowledge mostly from external research centres and private consultant firms. Ultimately, the use of external contracting is a common procedure within all the EU institutions in providing expertise and knowledge. Amidst all these studies, Geographers have had a quite visible presence, in particular in such thematic areas as urban and regional development, and territorial cooperation studies.

5. TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES AND EU POLICY EVALUATION: AN OPEN GROUND FOR GEOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS

Despite the efforts of Michel Barnier, a former Commissioner responsible for the EU Regional policy, in including the notion of Territorial Cohesion (*l'aménagement du territoire* in French) into the EU political agenda (see Faludi, 2004) – namely by dedicating a full topic to this 'novel EU concept', in the second Cohesion Report (see EC, 2001, p. 29-36), while relating it with the EU goal of achieving a more balanced territorial development – the fact remains that the goal of Territorial Cohesion was only included as the third pillar of Cohesion, by 2009, in the Lisbon Treaty (article 3). Strikingly, as Faludi (2006, p. 669) remembers, there is no official definition of the meaning of Territorial Cohesion. Probably there never will be, as the available literature on this notion is far from being consensual (see ESPON, 2006a; ESPON INTERCO, 2011; ESPON KITCASP, 2012; Medeiros, 2012; Grasland and Hamez, 2005; Van Well, 2012).

Again, Geographers can have, in my perspective, a decisive role in clarifying this multidimensional, ambiguous, and complex concept, in view of the central role of the concept of 'Territory' in geographical analysis. For instance, we defend the idea that the measure of territorial cohesion trends in the EU territory should become an integrant part of the triennial Cohesion Report, as this (Territorial Cohesion) is one of the prime goals of the EU Cohesion Policy. Such procedure requires the use of not only economic

related indicators, but also additional ones, associated with other key-dimensions of territorial development (see Medeiros, 2014b).

For similar reasons, Geographers can also have a pivotal role in the process of assessing EU Policies and their main Territorial Impacts. More concretely, these responsibilities can provide two main outcomes. Firstly, the proposal of more robust, holistic and easy-to-operate methodologies in assessing these impacts (see Medeiros, 2013). Secondly, a more pro-active participation in the evaluation reports of the EU programmes and policies, including the ones produced within the EU General Directions, such as DG Regio. Here, while the use of GIS tools is ultimately a prerogative of the Geographers work in present times, it should also be complemented by the use of 'pure geographical analysis' in detecting territorial trends, and in correlating them with the effects of the evaluated policies/programmes/projects, always in a multidisciplinary environment. In a way, the robustness of the Geographer's presence, in both the design and evaluation of EU territorial development strategies and policies has the potential to better paint and polish the exact significance of the term 'Territory', by taking stock in all its analytic dimensions, thus mitigating a somewhat long-term tendency to bring to the fore the 'economic narrative' in the EU policymaking process. One noteworthy example is the following statement present in the recently released Cohesion Report: "the only way of obtaining a complete overview of the impact of Cohesion Policy on the EU economies is by means of a macroeconomic model which incorporates the available evidence on the effects of the various kinds of interventions" (EC, 2014, p. 230). For any TIA expert, this is a highly controversial remark, to say the least.

This blurred-geographical approach in the EU policymaking can also be detected in the elaboration of the Europe 2020 strategy. Again, the notion of Territorial Cohesion is clearly associated with the third priority goal of this strategy: 'promoting an inclusive growth'. To the very least, this is puzzling for any Geographer as, by definition, any process aiming at achieving the goal of Territorial Cohesion should include additional analytic dimensions to the mere social aspects of development. As stated in the more recent Territorial Agenda, Territorial Cohesion is a set of principles for

harmonious, balanced, efficient, and sustainable territorial development (EC, 2011, p. 4). Hence, broadly speaking, one can say that the Territorial Agenda can be viewed as a Geographical *add-on* of the Europe 2020 strategy, by 'trying' to integrate territorial development and territorial cohesion as central goals of the EU policy agenda. In the same way, a wider participation of Geographers in the elaboration of EU Policies, such as the EU Cohesion Policy, could provide a substantial highlight of the conditions to attain a more balanced, polycentric, and harmonious EU territory. Then again, a necessary update of the 'old ESPDP' would gain by the inclusion of updated geographical theories on spatial planning, as the Territorial Agendas have a limited geographical scope. Yes, it is true that some ESPON synthesis reports (ESPON 2006b), and the two released ESPON ATLAS (2006, 2013) have been helping in filling up this geographical void. Nevertheless, these result, as the name indicates, of a summary of the several published ESPON reports, and do not act as a binding strategic piece for the EU policymaking process. Again, they fail in designing clear 'spatial planning' intervention priorities and axes for the EU territory, for the following decades.

Table 4 – European Union Policy Arenas. Source: Author's own elaboration.

Topic	GEO	Topic	GEO
Agriculture	H	Foreign and security policy	H
Audio-visual and media	L	Fraud prevention	L
Budget	L	Health	M
Climate action	H	Humanitarian aid and Civil Protection	H
Competition	M	Human rights	M
Consumers	M	Information technology	H
Culture	M	Institutional affairs	L
Customs	L	Justice and Home Affairs	L
Development and Cooperation	H	Maritime affairs and fisheries	H
Economic and monetary affairs	M	Multilingualism	L
Education, training and youth	M	Regional policy	H
Employment and social affairs	M	Research and innovation	H
Energy	H	Single market	H
Enlargement	H	Space	H
Enterprise	H	Sport	M
Environment	H	Taxation	M
EU citizenship	H	Trade	H
Food safety	L	Transport	H

GEO: Geographers potential Influence; H – High; M – Medium; L- Low

In a wider picture, Geographers have the knowledge to provide a more proactive contribution in shaping up the future of EU territorial planning strategies and agendas, and in elaborating territorial impact assessments tools, to be used in several financed EU programmes and policies. Additionally, they can also bring their holistic knowledge to the overall EU policymaking process, and to specific sectoral policies, with particular relevance to the following ones: transports, development and cooperation, maritime affairs and fisheries, agriculture, research and innovation, trade, enlargement, environment and energy (see Table 4). This contribution can be provided from the inside-out and/or as external consultants/experts.

As it stands, the prevailing vision of the Geographers, as the jack-of-all-trades of social sciences could justify such a wide presence in the existing EU policy arenas. There is also a much welcomed role for Geography, as the holistic king of knowledge, in the overall EU policymaking process. Such claims become real when observing the academic production of Geographers. Analogous ideas emerge when, on closer inspection, the European Commission defines expertise fields to select Geographers as experts for several tasks (policy evaluation, project's evaluation, elaboration of projects), although they are constrained by the social and economic aspects of Geography. As seen in Figure 3, four specific fields of analysis are defined, which synthetically include analysis of environmental, economic, cultural, and social aspects of policies, and urban and transport planning analysis.

In a way, this scientific dispersion of the geographical analysis could be seen as a positive facet, considering the increasing inclusion of key geographical analytic topics in these expertise fields, such as territorial planning and development. Yet, it also unravels a danger of hiding fundamental areas of this analysis, such as migrations, demography, tourism, innovation, and many areas associated with physical Geography, such as climate change and risks, to name a few. As in many instances, perhaps due to an overarching economist presence in the EU decisions committees, the 'pure territorial' analysis looks diluted within EU political interests in absorbing external expertise.



Figure 3 – Expertise fields to be selected by EU external experts.

Source: European Commission (n.d.).

Broadly speaking, in view of all the elements discussed in this article, we can deduce that Geography is neither an absent, nor a predominant science within the EU policymaking meanders. There is, in fact, a 'hidden Geography' within the EU. As seen, geographical analysis is a marked presence in many EC key strategic documents, and reports. Yet, this presence is especially evident in the ESPON Programme, where geographical analysis took a decisive role to better understand the EU territorial trends. Nevertheless, the Geographer's presence in shaping the EU policymaking process is yet to be a solid, constant, and needed one. In reality, we can make an analogy with the influence of Geographers in the EU with the now reclassified dwarf-planet Pluto. There it is... Far, far away... With no significant orbital influence over the eight recognized planets of the solar system. It is a part of this system, but not a major player, and even Eris, his alike dwarf planet, is slightly bigger and more influential. However, it will always be present within the solar system debates. Again, it will always remain 'hidden' from the major academic discussions, due to its distance, size and orbital influential factors. Just like the Geographers. The academic potential is there. They are part of the scientific system. Everyone knows they exist. They just need to be taken out of the shadow of the

EU policymaking process, and fight the 'thou shall not pass' obstacle, in order to bring their humble, yet potentially decisive contribution to improve the processes of EU territorial development, cohesion, sustainability, governance, policy design and evaluation. For this, Geographers also have a decisive role in their research choices, especially when many insist in producing non-policy relevant analysis.

6. CONCLUSION

Eratosthenes, known as the 'first Geographer', was often regarded as a 'jack-of-all-trades,' due to his various scientific skills and interests. He was also known for being great in many things, but never achieved a top ranking in anything. As seen along this text, this 'Eratosthenes Curse' has more or less prevailed for two millennia. Put simply, Geography, as science, and Geographers, as a professional class, have generally had a hard time in being regarded, for instance, as the main drivers of development policies design and implementation. This is particularly evident when analysing the relative reduced presence of Geographers working in EU institutions, and the reading of the multi-annual EU development strategies (Lisbon, Europe 2020), which are more aligned with the economic theory and narrative, in our view.

From this perspective and going back to the title of this paper: is there really a hidden Geography in the EU policymaking? We can definitely state that 'yes! there is!' More pointedly, Geography is hidden by the limited Geographer's action in influencing and shaping the design of EU intervention strategies and mainstream policies, such as the EU Cohesion Policy. Moreover, Geography is also hidden by the limited role of the European Commission in establishing an EU spatial planning strategy. Furthermore, Geography is hidden as the potential geographical knowledge on its central concept (Territory) is not being fully highlighted and exploited by EU institutions. More precisely, since it entered in the EU political debate and narrative (by the late XX century), the concept of Territorial Cohesion is still vaguely understood and unexplored, despite the fact that it was included as one of the main goals of the Lisbon Treaty (2009). More broadly, in our understanding, geographical knowledge is not being fully

exploited within the EU institutions in providing a global analysis of the main development processes undergoing in the EU territory. This understanding is vital to all those involved in public policymaking: researching uneven patterns of development, designing place-based strategies, using geographical knowledge to better explore renewable energy sources (thus promoting the goal of sustainable growth), to improve the territorial accessibilities, and to shed knowledge on the use of territorial impact assessment procedures, to name a few.

To a certain degree, Geography is also hidden, as it is not completely absent from the EU policymaking process. It is the 'Pluto Curse'. Put differently, it is part of the system, but, for the most part, is only visible upon closer examination. As already alluded along this paper, Geography and Geographers are not completely detached from the EU policymaking process, as EU institutions have a common practice to bring external expertise and knowledge, to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of EU policymaking processes. Here, geographical knowledge has had a visible role, for instance, in shaping urban development strategies. Also visible, is the wide presence of this knowledge provided by the ESPON programme, the 'old' European Spatial Development Perspective and, in a more reduced manner, the two Territorial Agendas.

In times of acute financial crises in Europe the 'growth narrative' tends to override the 'development narrative'. As such, in the meantime, the 'it is the economy stupid vision' will prevail over the 'it is the territory stupid vision'. Hence the rise of the 'territorial analysis' is not fully dependent of the 'rise of Geography' relevancy among other social sciences. However, the potential role of Geography in the EU policymaking is also depending on the Geographer's choices in providing updated theory on themes like territorial cohesion, territorial development (with particular emphasis to the regional and urban levels), territorial cooperation, and territorial impact assessment, which are strongly linked with the EU development strategies and policies. In a more detailed way, it is up to Geographers to highlight the advantages of supporting 'development policies' in spite of more narrow minded 'growth policies'. Additionally, Geographers can have a fundamental role in educating EU policy-makers to understand the need to replace the strategic and environmental impact assessment procedures,

and the common socioeconomic impact assessment tools, with the more complete territorial impact assessment procedures, in order to present a more faithful context of the relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency of the EU implemented projects/programmes/policies.

In an ever increasing globalized world, the Geographer's holistic knowledge, which covers not only the economic dimension of development, but also touches other fundamental scientific domains of development (social, environmental, governance, spatial planning) has the potential to provide a solid ground for an increasing presence of geographical analyses in policymaking, as an essential counterpart of pure 'growth target policies'. Anyhow, the path towards a more visible Geography in the EU policymaking is a harsh and long one. This would require the presence of a wider number of Geographers in the EU institutions, an increasing recognition of the need to implement EU spatial planning strategies, and the acknowledgment of 'Territory' as a central concept of the EU strategic and political design, intervention, and evaluation procedures. If not, Geographers and Geography will most probably remain overall hidden on this EU policymaking process, while being called for irregular interventions, in a fairly widespread pool of thematic arenas.

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