Globalisation and the objectives associated with European integration and cohesion have influenced spatial planning in Europe. The need for developing a strategic response through European policy tools and local and regional strengths clearly emerged.

A key consideration of the TERRA programme, however, was that European spatial planning cannot represent the sum of the various national and/or regional and local views. It must be the result of integrating these into a joint vision of the development of the European territory, based on both major areas of agreement and on the diversities and specific characteristics of this territory (see European Commission, The TERRA Programme, 1996).

How relevant is this global vision to local experimentation in spatial development? The TERRA programme was conceived at a time when the ESDP exercise was not yet completed. TERRA projects were formed out of a series of local voluntary initiatives in the absence of a mature global orientation for the European territory. The only “guiding vision” was the principles set out at a meeting of EU Ministers responsible for planning in Noordwijk, the Netherlands, hardly known to local partners.

In this respect, it is instructive to address two complementary issues in relation to the TERRA experience.

### 3. ESDP policy objectives and TERRA

The process of drafting and completing the ESDP and the execution of TERRA projects had parallel trajectories. TERRA was itself conceived as a network in which all projects and individual partners were influenced by the ESDP and its development and by the interest in applying a modern spatial planning approach at the local level. What was the impact of this interface and what were the outputs of this exercise of integrating a number of local initiatives in a global perspective?

Managing the programme not just as a collection of individual projects, but as a network within the framework of the ESDP was a breakthrough in the execution of an interregional co-operation programme. The introduction of the ESDP considerations provided an integrative element to the programme.

At the beginning, there had been some evidence that projects within the programme were proceeding in a fragmented and isolated manner. The ESDP provided, at the very least, guidelines for reflection and discussion and increased the understanding for spatial planning in the European context. This was particularly evident at the programme seminars, which were in fact consciously organised with the ESDP as a background. The TERRA seminars and workshops provided a base for disseminating the culture of modern spatial planning and for discussing the difficulties and opportunities for its promotion in widely diverse cultural and institutional contexts.

The annual meetings of the TERRA programme held in Naples (Italy, November 1998) and Pori (Finland, June 1999) led to conclusions on the progress of the projects in relation to the ESDP at three complementary levels:

- The maturity of the projects and a comparison with their initial objectives and with those of the programme;
- The awareness of ESDP policy objectives and their inclusion in work methods;
- The contributions, in terms of exemplary experiences, of the ESDP policy objectives insofar as they applied to other geographical contexts or were liable to enhance subsequent versions of the ESDP.

At the meeting in Naples in 1998, the emphasis and the main contributions focused on lessons learned and the direct transfer of work methods among the various project networks. The meeting allowed local and regional entities involved to discover the initiatives in which their own project was included. For the first time they were able to view each work area as part of a network and each specific strategy as part of a larger work strategy.

The most important contributions at the Naples meeting reinforced the aims of the TERRA programme, by fostering: a) the transfer of methods and solutions applied to shared difficulties; b) the extension of the outward view of the project network; and c) the comparison of the progress of the projects, which made a positive contribution to the subsequent maturing of the less-developed projects.

In this respect, an important feature of the Naples gathering was to provide the possibility of horizontal meetings between the different projects by way of working groups established according to similarity of activities or possibilities of transferring methods between the various networks.
At the second TERRA programme meeting in Pori in 1999, projects were already in such a state of development and maturity that it was possible to shift the stress from the direct transfer of results to the analysis of experiences. At Pori the intermediate results of the projects were expressed according to the ESDP criteria and policy objectives:

- Co-operation between cities and rural areas;
- Equality in the access to infrastructures and know-how;
- Prudent management of the natural and cultural heritage.

The TERRA programme was inspired by the ESDP and it is consistent as far as its essential propositions were concerned with the Noordwijk document. Although the major axes of policy priorities were already evident, TERRA was specifically targeted to the application of sustainable development criteria in areas of a fragile nature or under threat. Assimilation of ESDP regional policy elements by TERRA projects ran parallel to progress in the projects’ development. TERRA projects developed a wide range of actions in all three ESDP priority areas.

Many projects pursued the aim of a polycentric and balanced development as well as establishment of a new urban-rural relationship in a variety of ways:

- In relation to intraurban problems, gateway cities in the POSIDONIA network attempted to resolve conflicts between port functions and urban priorities.
- In the same network the large coastal Mediterranean city partners attempted to strike a balance between demands for growth intensified by their gateway functions and the need for preserving and highlighting their natural endowments as well as their cultural assets.
- Efforts to contain growth in areas under pressure and distribute it in a more sustainable way to the least developed hinterland were pursued in the CONCERCOST and LORE partnerships.
- Several projects engaged in the development of a sustainable system of rural settlements with complementary services and employment opportunities supported by appropriate infrastructure to overcome isolation and structural weaknesses (CONCERCOST).
- Similarly, in a cross-border context, a river catchment area in the DUERO-DOURO project served as the basis for preparing an integrated strategy for development.
- Urban-rural integration, especially in areas where rural settlements and rural economy are important assets for the competitiveness of the region, was pursued in many projects as e.g. in GEOPLANTOUR.
- Integrated planning across statutory borders in a large metropolitan area in the heart of Europe was the focus of the Project GROOTSTAD. It demonstrated the privileged position of cross-border areas as a laboratory for developing voluntary mechanisms to deal with rapid change in the absence or slow development of statutory structures.
- A network of cities and municipalities which had experienced economic and population decline co-operated to increase their competitiveness through a common planning approach based on sustainable development principles (SDTP).
- A large growing city region tried to learn about planning for local sustainability by undertaking a series of pilot projects examining sustainable recreation in nearby natural areas, applying a social participation bottom-up process (SRUNA).

The second policy option of the ESDP, “parity of access to infrastructure and knowledge”, was less evident for two reasons:
• The role of regional and local authorities has been more limited in this area. In most cases infrastructure provision and funding fall under the jurisdiction of national governments.

• The theme did not lend itself to the particular considerations of the TERRA programme.

Still, actions at the local level and interregional co-operation can play an important role in promoting policy options aimed at improving parity of access to infrastructure and knowledge. On this last point the EUROGISE network addressed information technology trying to improve the use of Geographical Information System (GIS) for spatial planning purposes and the integration of the various systems and databases.

One project, POSIDONIA, addressed the issue of developing a specialised and intermodal system of complementary ports in the Mediterranean, that had been, however, beyond the competence of local authorities.

Other projects, among other actions, addressed the improvement of accessibility to infrastructure, especially in remote and cross-border areas through appropriate planning and integration of the locally generated plans into regional and national priorities. Such cases were the CONCERCOST and the ALBA-Ter networks. Two cross-border projects, GROOTSTAD and DUERO-DOURO, also attempted to improve cross-border communication, the first in a functional metropolitan area of the centre of Europe, the second in a remote area between Spain and Portugal.

With respect to the third theme of policy priorities, TERRA projects demonstrated how the sustainable management of natural and cultural endowments might improve the competitiveness of regions and overcome the structural weaknesses of remote and rural areas. Putting to value cultural and natural endowments as a way to improve competitiveness was a recurring theme in the TERRA programme as rural and remote areas realised the potential of capturing a segment of the market for either tourism or investments.
Improving territorial competitiveness

The GEOPLANTOUR project, a network of two municipalities from Greece and Germany, intended to become a model of development for similar territories aiming at the correction of development inequalities through sustainable development principles and an integrated policy approach. The project dealt with three crucial features to enhance the competitiveness of the territories concerned: tourism, ecological agriculture and spatial planning/land use applying GIS technologies.

The project developed several activities in the three fields of action in each territory, carrying out “pilot projects” on tourism, ecological production of crops and marketing of eco-agro-foods and GIS application and uses for future spatial policy decisions. Partners focused on the exchange of experiences among the two territories with the support of regional authorities. A special emphasis was placed on the organisation of several meetings, seminars and workshops with participation of interest groups and stakeholders from each municipality. This contributed to a high level of exchanges of experiences and common work among the partners.

Managing cultural, natural assets led to new concept

The TERRA INCOGNITA project, a network of Spanish and Italian partners, developed an innovative methodology for the sustainable management of cultural heritage based on the concept of “territory-museum”, establishing a spatial planning model integrating the management of architectural heritage and allowing its conservation through a sustainable development strategy.

The partners developed a strategy to analyse and plan actions about sustainable use of the cultural heritage and the management and economic promotion of the territory, carrying out actions of information about the territory as a museum, interpretation of the cultural heritage, development of basic infrastructures for the areas and conservation measures for cultural resources.

The project constituted a framework of reference for the development of public policies at local and regional level in the field of conservation, improvement and management of cultural heritage. The outputs and results achieved showed that the TERRA INCOGNITA project contributed in an important way to the economic development of local economies in the territories concerned through the improvement of the economic potential of natural and cultural local resources.
projects an alternative model to the exploitation of these resources was sought, based on the diffusion of development pressures to the hinterland through cultural tourism.

- More strictly delineated areas composed of wetlands and coastal ecosystems requiring special protection measures and an integrated management of wider catchment areas.
- Urban coastal zones where a balance was sought between metropolitan-wide concerns, gateway and internationally oriented functions, local needs and the preservation of the environment.

Overall, and despite the diversity of the projects, ranging from broad territorial spatial planning to more operational development of specific objectives that are part of wider territorial strategies, three general observations could be demonstrated through the TERRA projects:

- The ESDP policy options were also valid at the local level. Spatial development is a process that relates people and social actors with their territory at different and successive scales and levels which they can identify and act upon.
- The adoption of a more outward-looking global perspective in the final draft of the ESDP document was a necessity that emerged out of the local experience. Regions can better identify comparative advantages based on their territorial endowments if these lead to greater competitiveness in a world economy.
- TERRA projects demonstrated the validity of achieving environmental objectives and preserving natural and cultural assets by developing them in a sustainable way.

3.2. Enriching the European experience through TERRA

Since TERRA projects were conceived before refinement of the ESDP policy aims, what is the congruence of these aims with those pursued at the local level? What is the relevance of global considerations and orientations to local concerns and in what way do they influence local actors elaborating spatial visions for their territory? Which of the key three policy options of the ESDP are better served through a voluntary bottom-up approach?

The projects have a life and “biography” of their own, but an analysis of these projects allows conclusions, which have validity and scope beyond the specific objectives of the project.

Although some proposals submitted for the TERRA programme aimed directly at the implementation of spatial planning criteria from an interregional standpoint, the majority had more local approaches in which co-operation and networking particularly contributed to compare, discuss and eventually transfer applications.

Territorial development objectives at the local level are not necessarily most effectively served by focusing on the development of spatial concepts for the regions, but can also be approached by addressing specific issues in an operational and viable way within broader guidelines.

A basic objective of the TERRA programme was to serve as a laboratory for the promotion of spatial planning at the local and regional level through interregional cooperation. In this context, many TERRA projects promoted specific objectives and actions inscribed in wider territorial strategies, while others concentrated on the methodology, organisational structures and social processes relating to spatial development and policy integration.

The TERRA programme showed that both approaches are valid. In fact, some specific ESDP policy options lent themselves better to specific operational objectives while others refer more directly to the development of broader territorial strategies.

The TERRA programme as a whole could be assessed on both levels although the considerations and actions of projects undertaking spatial planning and the development of a territorial vision and those of projects addressing specific objectives were obviously different and their reflections on the ESDP were correspondingly different:

- Projects involved with the development of a territorial vision and of an integrated spatial strategy at the local level concentrated to a large extent on horizontal integration addressing the social dynamics of the territory and the development of local partnerships. For the horizontal as well as the vertical
integration of policies, they had to examine the institutional arrangements within their territory and the development of viable mechanisms for the implementation of spatial strategies. Ultimately their success was dependent on the capacity to generate a clear vision for the territory but also on highly developed planning skills within the region that accurately identified and focused on relevant issues and where outcomes could be achieved.

- Those projects involved in implementation of more operational objectives in support of spatial strategies and global orientations were more concerned with vertical integration reflecting on higher plans and strategies. The critical issues in this respect were the appropriateness of the objectives, their relevance both to the local context as well as to the promotion of wider territorial strategies, the effectiveness of the means available to the locality, the competence as well as responsibility of the local community.

Not only were the TERRA projects influenced by the ESDP by conceptualising their results and redirecting their objectives on the basis of the options provided by the ESDP. The ESDP also drew benefits from TERRA, because the actual experience of the projects shed light upon findings and difficulties, which coloured the ESDP assertions, namely issues such as:

- The difficulty of networking due to the different planning cultures and administrative competencies.
- The difficulty of promoting a multisectoral approach to problems within social and administrative entities, which are likewise subject to “division of labour” and thematic, and functional specialisation.
• The demand of a smooth communication flow and the co-ordination of action needed to transfer results in a synchronised manner in respect of the development of the projects.

TERRA was originally conceived as directed towards applied research within the scope of spatial planning (or “regional planning”, as it was called when it was first announced) with the core purpose of evaluating the utility and relevance of certain actions within its strategic regional vision. The smaller scale of the areas included in the TERRA projects enhanced their experimental dimension, allowing emphasis on project implementation to test new methods and spatial planning tools to be applied in similar geographical contexts or in connection with similar difficulties.

In fact, the announcement of the TERRA programme openly stressed that it was not meant to become a new source of finance for local administrations. Rather, it was intended to test the consequences of addressing the difficulties of spatial planning at a local scale within a wider European context, with fine-tuning of the applicable instruments via the wealth of experiences derived from interregional co-operation.

In attempting to establish the relationship between TERRA and the ESDP we have looked at the validation of its general principles from the projects’ experience. However, the most interesting contributions of the TERRA experience to the ESDP do not belong to the sphere of general principles (except for a few exceptional projects) but to the sphere of specific project management.

The TERRA experience provided the ESDP with the weighty contrast between empirical reality and the lessons derived from the benefits and difficulties of working on the basis of interregional co-operation networks. It also provided lessons derived by each individual partner in pursuing modern spatial planning concepts in their particular regions. These issues are discussed in the next chapter.