

Cooperation and partnership for the best use of ESPON results

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Context

- "Spatial North" (Northern Periphery INTERREG IIB), 2005-07
- www.spatialnorth.eu: *"The primary objective of the project is to develop a 'toolbox' or set of good practices for integrated and participatory spatial planning and development, applicable to the partner regions and all other regions of the Northern Periphery Programme Area."*
 - ...including: *"analysis of the relevance of ESDP and other policy documents, particularly with regard to their relevance for the Northern Periphery Area."*
- a sub-project: "spatial development perspectives for eastern Finland", utilising ESPON-based research on eastern Finland:
 - target area covers several planning regions, representing interregional cooperation
 - an ESPON research input was commissioned for this work, aiming at 1) positioning eastern Finland in Europe on the basis of ESPON results, 2) deepening the analysis of the region's spatial structure (patterns of population change, settlement system & polycentricity, border location: positioning eastern Finland not only in the ESPON container but also with the Russian connection)

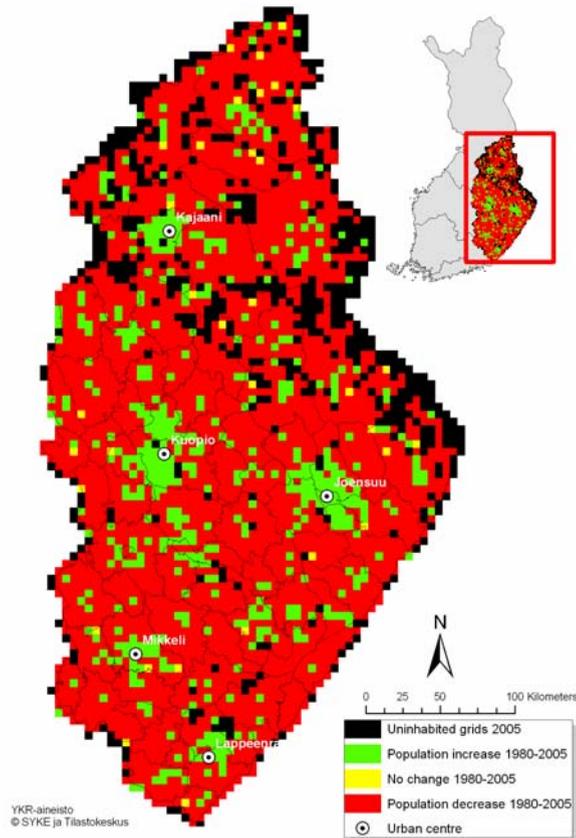
1. Ideal partnership?

- aiming at a joint learning process between planners/policy-makers and researchers, over a sufficiently long period
- intermediaries (researchers who are familiar with local conditions) important
- key issue: division of labour
 - which tasks at an international (TPG) level, which ones at a local/regional level?

2. What can be expected from the users?

- research ideas (which may also challenge the ESPON policy framework)
- transfer of findings into practice and policy-making
 - research affects policies diffusely and indirectly, e.g., by heightening the awareness of certain problems and reshaping others, or by contributing certain facts that provide new aspects to existing problems
- data; in the Spatial North project: joint analysis of grid-based data

Limits to a polycentricity-based strategy: the case of eastern Finland



3. What can be expected from TPGs?

- whose expectations?
- clear division of labour from the outset, dialogue between users and researchers very important during the planning stage, not to the same extent during the implementation stage

4. Ensuring the use of the results in practice?

- in the Spatial North: informing policy-makers at a national level important; e.g., reporting results at the annual national conferences of spatial planners and researchers ("Spatial Planning Day")
- targeted analysis should be linked with and synchronised with decision-making processes (drawing planning documents, guidelines, legislation etc.) by the user

5. How can the European-wide relevance be achieved?

- a few targeted analyses (focusing on a limited number of regions) could be extended onto a European level; so a targeted project could be seen as a pilot phase of a full-scale ESPON project
- MC has an important role in identifying projects/targeted analyses of European-wide relevance and should promote them on a European scale
- European-wide relevance?