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Spatial planning systems

A European perspective

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DOI
[10.4337/9781839106255.00011](10.4337/9781839106255.00011)

Publication date
2024

Document Version
Final published version

Published in
Spatial Planning Systems in Europe

Important note
To cite this publication, please use the final published version (if applicable).
Please check the document version above.

1. Spatial planning systems: a European perspective

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INTRODUCTION

There is perennial demand for more comparative knowledge about the nature of spatial planning in different countries. Indeed, systematic international comparison has been a force for shaping both the practice of planning and its conceptualisation for more than a century (Masser and Williams, 1986; Sykes et al., 2023; Ward, 2000). Pioneers of modern town planning in Europe sought inspiration from other countries long before international exchanges were commonplace. One notable example is Ebenezer Howard whose influential ideas on the garden city were shaped by his experiences in the United States and Europe in the late nineteenth century (Peiser and Forsyth, 2021; Shepherd, 2020). The international exchange of ideas and practices has since become the norm (Cook et al., 2015; Ward, 2000, 2017) and it has been 'the natural thing to investigate the way problems were being solved in other countries' (Hall, 1997, p. 346).

Learning from other countries is now part and parcel of the planning world, not least in Europe where the creation of the European Union (EU) with its increasing interest in territorial development matters has delivered vast opportunities for international exchange and learning (Zimmerman, 2020). The EU has encouraged and funded many thousands of planners to share experience and work across borders. There are benefits in the inspiration it may give for fresh thinking about potential approaches in benchmarking performance, and in understanding the very nature of planning. Finally, at the EU level the thirst for knowledge on how spatial planning operates in different contexts is motivated by the need to create a solid knowledge base upon which to build future EU territorial development strategies and policies in a way that ensures their smooth delivery in the member countries (Faludi, 2008; Williams, 1996).

However, the effective transposition of knowledge and practice from one place to another is difficult. Learning from other places must take account

of the varying conditions in the origin and destination (Cotella et al., 2016). This applies to comparing places within countries, but even more so between them. There are obvious differences in physical geography, economy, politics and social conditions from place to place. More fundamentally, the form and operation of the spatial planning system, like all governance, is largely determined by the underlying social model, the dominant social values and cultural assumptions that have evolved through history and which structure social relations and shape a particular 'way of doing things' (Nadin and Stead, 2008; Stead et al., 2015). How things are done is not just an outcome of the collection of laws and instruments but a demonstration of a planning culture (Knieling and Othengrafen, 2009; Othengrafen and Reimer, 2013), that is, 'the ways … planning in a given multi-national region, country or city is conceived, institutionalised and enacted' (Friedmann, 2011, p. 168). Study of cross-national comparative planning highlights the rootedness of planning in local culture and how it is constrained by path dependency (Münter and Reimer, 2023).

Therefore, learning from other places, and the import and export of planning ideas, carries risks. We see these clearly in the transposition of European planning to colonies that replicated the diversity of European spatial planning cultures in the Global South, imposing practices insensitive to local cultures (Silva, 2015). The outcome is 'a conflict between the rationalities of governing and administration, and rationalities of survival (of those who are poor and marginalised)' (Watson, 2009, p. 2272). Thus, contradictions between technocratic rigid spatial plans and the reality of self-organised urban development are commonplace (Korah et al., 2017), and are exacerbated by 'cut and paste' design solutions imposed from elsewhere by international consultants (Ball et al., 2008). Therefore, it is appropriate to reiterate the point made by Masser and Williams in the seminal text they edited in 1986, *Learning from Other Countries*. With some understatement, they remind us how 'the complexities involved … and the difficulty of identifying truly comparable or transferable phenomenon, have often presented greater problems than have been anticipated at first' (Masser and Williams, 1986, p. xii).

This book reviews evidence on how spatial planning is understood and practised, and how it is changing in the EU. It draws on a long line of research on comparative planning, and in particular, the ESPON COMPASS[1] projects on Territorial Governance and Spatial Planning Systems in Europe (Nadin et al., 2018) and Cross-fertilisation of Cohesion Policy and Spatial Planning (Nadin et al., 2021).

In this chapter, we introduce our understanding of the notion of spatial planning, briefly review its significance in the context of the EU, examine the relationship between EU territorial governance policy and the evolution of domestic spatial planning systems, and rehearse the rationale for the book.

SPATIAL PLANNING

Our understanding of spatial planning embraces other familiar terms: 'urban planning', 'town and country planning', and 'city and regional planning', to mention a few in the English language. These terms broadly describe the arrangements for regulating change in the use of land and property, the instruments used to design and manage urban and rural development, and the process of reconciling the many competing interests involved. In Europe, 'spatial planning' has come into common usage as a generic term for these arrangements. There is much more to spatial planning than this, of course, as is explained more fully in Chapters 2 and 3. Here, we introduce our understanding of the notion of spatial planning with reference to European and comparative perspectives.

There are many ways of understanding the notion of planning (Healey, 2010a). Its meaning varies from place to place and over time (Fischler, 2012). Prevailing ideas about planning in the affluent developed countries of the West have evolved through phases during which varying degrees of emphasis have been given to the design of physical environment and layout of land uses, the procedures of rational decision-making, critical theory and radical activism, social equity and spatial justice, citizens and community engagement, collaboration and communication among experts, and the ecological crisis, among others (Allmendinger, 2017; Freestone, 2000; Massey, 2017; Taylor, 1998). Underlying theories concern the relationship between the individual and society, between the state, market and civil society, and between technical expertise and politics in planning. This is not the place to elaborate on these ideas, but rather to make the point that the 'evolution' of the meaning of spatial planning in a country (or planning culture) happens at varying speeds and in different directions. The progression of ideas is not linear or neatly compartmentalised, and competing ideas coexist in one place. The idea of planning in a society is inevitably contested, or even contradictory. Healey (2011, p. 14) explains: '[i]t is a contingently universal stream of ideas, evolving with our contingencies and innovative energies and always provisional'.

The progression of planning theory and practice in the Anglo-Saxon world has been well documented. Because the dominance of the English language in international exchange, the Anglo-Saxon experience is often erroneously used as a yardstick for other places (Kunzmann, 2004). It is also not uncommon for authors to overgeneralise about changing ideas in spatial planning without acknowledging the enormous variation across the world, for example, in relation to the dominance of rigid blueprint-style planning, or (from a Western European perspective) the transition from a technocratic view of planning 'to an understanding of planning practice embedded in politics' (Friedmann,

2011, p. 211) or the political demand for spatial planning in the context of neo-liberalisation trends (Waterhout et al. 2013). Without doubt there are common themes in the way that spatial planning is understood and practiced in the West. Variations are strongly evident in Europe, not least in the differences between long-standing social democratic societies and those in transition from Communism or dictatorships. The rootedness of planning in the locality has implications for the methods of making cross-national comparison of spatial planning systems, as explained in Chapter 2.

Having argued the case for variety, we can turn to the fundamental common themes. The thread that underpins the idea of spatial planning in this book is the imperative for societies to collectively manage the transformation of the places in which they live (Mazza, 2016). Our places in the natural and built environment are common resources. Space, or the rights to use space, can be bought and sold. Powerful economic, social and political forces drive transformation, dispensing benefits and imposing costs in a seemingly haphazard way, but in the interests of production and consumption. Governments, as the legitimate authorities, ostensibly use spatial planning (alongside other instruments) to control, guide or design transformation of their territories, and to manage externality effects and distributional consequences (Berisha et al., 2021a). In principle, this is done in the public interest and in pursuit of common normative goals such as more sustainable development and social justice. In practice it is difficult to identify a common interest because there are many at stake, and much uncertainty about how spatial planning affects the distribution of costs and benefits. Uncertainty, unanticipated outcomes and wicked problems abound, and parts of government are effectively market actors. Crucially, there is much competition and even conflict among interests, and planning can be, and often is, 'captured' by the more powerful among those interests.

Spatial planning is intended to steer and shape the transformation of places, or spatial development; the intricate amalgam of the physical form and qualities of the natural and built environments, to maintain cultural heritage and to protect natural habitats and eco systems, to manage the pattern of land uses and settlement, to provide hard and soft infrastructure, and the distribution of economic activity, services and functions across a territory. These facets of spatial development exist and interact through layered networks at multiple scales from the local to the global, and they come together in localities or 'places'. At whatever scale – the street, neighbourhood, village, city, region or transnational space – places have experienced dramatic changes over the last 200 years, and in Europe, especially since 1950.

The conditions of spatial development are both indicators of, and principal factors determining, the economic, social and environmental performance of places. They are inseparable from social and economic conditions and the varying quality of life of citizens: their well-being, life chances and security.

Wide expansion of infrastructure, and vastly expanded agricultural land use, have contributed to great prosperity for Europe as a whole, and urban agglomeration has fuelled economic productivity and innovation, but at a price. It hardly needs to be said that patterns of spatial development have damaging impacts that are widely reported (EEA, 2016, 2022; Evers et al., 2020). For example, fragmented and dispersed urbanisation is inefficient in its use of the critical finite land resource and undermines biodiversity (Cortinovis et al., 2019); insensitive urban 'regeneration' can lead to gentrification and displacement of communities (Alexandri, 2018); and intensive industrial farming compounds pollution and damages natural capital including water. Adverse spatial development trends are evident also at the European scale, particularly the continuing concentration of investment and growth in 'the economic core', a belt from North-West Europe to northern Italy (Faludi, 2015). This reinforces social and economic disparities and concentrates environmental costs in some of the most vulnerable places.

It follows that shaping spatial development is critical for tackling the great global challenges of sustainable development, poverty reduction, universal good health, strengthening resilience, safeguarding cultural assets and, above all, tackling the threat of climate change (Solly et al., 2021). These goals demand fundamental changes to the form of urban development, settlement patterns, the management of ecological systems, infrastructure investment and the use of land. Many bodies from the local to the global understandably see spatial planning as a primary means to bring about these changes (D'Hondt et al., 2020; OECD, 2017; Seto et al., 2014; WHO, 2020; Berisha et al., 2023).

Advocacy for spatial planning tends to underestimate the difficulty of planning in the face of powerful interests, public and private. Land and property are by far the largest forms of capital, and their transformation hands out huge benefits to some and may impose devastating costs on others. There is fierce competition in modern societies over spatial development to gain benefits or defend the status quo. Also, the reliance on spatial planning may be misplaced; it can be part of the problem. For example, perverse planning policies can enable or even encourage transformation that has damaging effects, such as building on vulnerable flood plains. Planning may unnecessarily constrain and divert market investment. Planning instruments may provide symbolic reassurance that challenges are being tackled, when they are perpetuated through lack of political will, professional capacity or good governance.

SPATIAL PLANNING SYSTEMS

Spatial planning is ubiquitous. Governments of all countries (or states) seek to manage spatial development of their territory in their interests. The ways of doing so are varied, but there is generally a core set of institutions which

we can describe as the spatial planning system. Janin Rivolin (2012) describes spatial planning systems as 'institutional technologies' that allow public authorities to guide and control spatial transformations through the allocation of land use and spatial development rights (Berisha et al., 2021a). The definition of 'institutional technology' draws attention to both the formal, explicitly defined regulatory plans, strategies and procedures, and the abstract, informal institutions that govern social interaction. Institutions structure our behaviour in 'doing planning', and confer trustworthiness in the competent and ethical operation of the planning system (Healey, 1999). Salet (2018, p. 27) describes these institutions as sets of public norms. 'They may be cultural, economic or political, and they may be informal or legal.' Norms within the institutional technology of planning are not fixed. There is both continuity and change and a degree of path dependence (Sorensen, 2015). Salet (2018, p. 3) warns of the increasing volatility of institutions and 'vulnerable foundations of public norms'. However, the consequences of change are uncertain. For example, some studies identify an erosion of the public interest norm or ethic in planning practice in Western Europe (Tait, 2016), whilst others find that, at least in some countries, the public service ethos (an institution) remains strong despite the dominance of private interests in development (Sturzaker and Hickman 2023; Sabah and Gülümser, 2023). Either way, there is the critical implication that the formal and informal institutions of spatial planning are being maintained, reviewed and renewed over time. Van Assche et al. (2014) explain that this is a result of the ongoing transformation of, and interaction between, formal and informal institutions in a process of 'mutual adaptation' (p. 663). They argue that most studies of spatial planning 'tend to focus on formal institutions, or, more narrowly, plans and planning laws' (p. 657), and that this leads to over-simplistic formulas for reform that will be shaped by the most powerful actors. Instead, we should be 'mindful that a set of formal institutions (plans, policies, laws) can only be effective thanks to an ongoing dialectics with informal institutions' (p. 672).

Thus, a spatial planning system comprises an interrelation of both formal and informal institutions. However, the use of the term 'system' suggests a coherent and discrete toolbox of formal instruments of law and plans, which is an overstatement for most countries, including in Europe, where the reality for even the formal aspects is a collection of disconnected parts (Blanc et al., 2022a, 2022b).

Even where the spatial planning toolbox is complete and coherent, other sectors of government and their instruments will also have a strong bearing on spatial development, sometimes complementing but often competing with or overriding spatial planning norms. The influence of other sectoral policy may be directly spatial, as in the case of water management prohibiting urban development in vulnerable areas; or it may be indirect, as in the case of a research

and development or business support subsidising certain types of economic activity without reference to their location. Environmental sector policy that protects habitats and ecosystems, and economic subsidies that encourage growth and investment in infrastructure, have a critical influence on spatial development. In Europe sectoral policies have been especially important in shaping the form of spatial planning in many countries because of the EU's significant role in environmental and regional policy. It is to that European dimension that we now turn.

THE SPATIAL PLANNING APPROACH AND EUROPEAN TERRITORIAL GOVERNANCE

Despite recurrent crises in the twenty-first century, the EU remains a unique achievement of economic and political integration. European integration requires the member states and EU institutions to engage in a constant process of navigation between safeguarding national sovereignty and embracing a European polity (Hooghe and Marks, 2001). The evolution of European spatial planning policy and practice since the end of the 1980s has sat squarely in this interface between the autonomy of domestic governments in policy-making and the collective efforts of the EU. In explanation, it is first necessary to restate that competence for spatial planning rests only with the member states (Shaw and Nadin, 2000). Thus, there is no EU directive or regulation in the field of spatial planning, if understood mainly as regulatory land use planning (see below), since member state governments have sole competence. Nevertheless, the EU has had a spatial agenda since its inception, and spatial planning is undoubtedly a vital tool in delivering important goals for the EU, notably, sustainable and balanced development. This agenda has further strengthened and consolidated because of the introduction of the objective of economic and social cohesion within the Single European Act in 1986. Furthermore, with the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009 (European Council, 2007), the EU further substantiated its spatial agenda by adding a territorial dimension to the objective of economic and social cohesion. Although there is some ambiguity in the objective, it stresses the territorial or spatial nature of EU goals, especially balanced development, fair access to services and comparable quality of living environments irrespective of location (CoR, 2003; CEC, 2008; CEC, 2004; Zaucha and Böhme, 2020). Spatial planning is not mentioned in the Treaty, but the Committee of the Regions is very clear in saying that territorial cohesion will be achieved 'by means of spatial planning' (CoR, 2003, p. 1).

  Domestic spatial planning systems are plainly important for the implementation of EU policies such as environmental protection and regional development, and are influenced by EU law, either directly or indirectly (Cotella,

2020). These relations are discussed at length in Chapters 6, 8 and 9. It is sufficient here to stress that despite the lack of competence, the EU institutions (the member states collectively) have a legitimate interest in domestic spatial planning, since it plays a part in the performance of many areas of EU policy. In this context, planning authorities in the member states, the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries and other candidate and neighbour countries, have demonstrated a willingness to cooperate intergovernmentally on spatial planning under the auspices of the EU institutions or the Council of Europe. For their part, the EU institutions, particularly the Commission, have found ways to fund cooperation on spatial planning.

To set the scene for the chapters that follow it is useful to introduce two specific aspects of the European dimension of spatial planning in a little more detail – the distinctive meaning of the term 'spatial planning' from an EU perspective, and the idea of Europeanisation and its consequences for the convergence or divergence of planning practices. A brief historical review will help to explain both.

The English language term 'spatial planning' was adopted by the European institutions in the 1990s, following early work on the European Regional/ Spatial Planning Charter by the Council of Europe (CEMAT, 1983). It is a literal translation of words used to denote the planning system in other languages in, for example, Germany and the Netherlands. The terms dominant in English speaking countries, 'town and country planning' and 'city and regional planning', had to be avoided because some member states, particularly Germany and the UK, thought this might suggest the EU had a competence and leverage over national planning systems (Faludi, 2000; Waterhout, 2012).[2] The use of the term 'spatial planning' was helpful in separating the interests and objectives of member state governments and the EU. On the one hand, member state governments tend to understand planning as a mechanism for exercising authority over rights to build or change land use, which we call here: regulatory land-use planning. In this view, the primary objective of spatial planning is to manage land-use change at the local level and to coordinate the overall transformation of territory at a higher scale. Governments are keen to guard their sovereignty over this competence whether they call it land-use planning, town and country planning or spatial planning, or similar terms in their home languages (see Chapter 3). On the other hand, the EU institutions tend to emphasise the integrative role of planning – the coordination of the territorial impacts of sectoral policies through strategies, especially for those sectors where the EU has competence. The EU is a highly segmented bureaucracy, policy silos are readily apparent – agriculture, environment, regional development, transport, and others. So too are the substantial 'costs of non-coordination' of the spatial impacts of sectoral policies, or 'spatial policy' (Robert et al., 2001; Williams, 1984; Chapter 6 in this book). The problem of

siloed policy making is replicated in all countries, where the power of sectoral policies and the market often outdoes attempts at orderly, efficient spatial development. The notion of planning as coordinating the territorial impacts of sectoral policies we call spatial planning. The distinction between (regulatory) land-use planning and (strategic) spatial planning is recognised in Europe (Witte and Hartmann, 2022) but can be confusing because spatial planning is also used to as an umbrella term for all forms of planning. We use spatial planning in this book to refer to all types of planning and indicate where we are especially concerned with 'the spatial planning approach promoted by the EU.

The EU orientation towards the inter-sectoral policy coordination role of spatial planning was central to a major cross-national comparison of planning systems in the then 15 member states of the EU published in 1997: The EU Compendium of Spatial Planning Systems and Policies (CEC, 1997). It says spatial planning 'embraces measures to co-ordinate the spatial impacts of other sectoral policies, to achieve a more even distribution of economic development between regions than would otherwise be created by market forces, and to regulate the conversion of land and property uses' (p. 24). Thus, in its explanation of spatial planning, the Compendium covered both land use regulation (urban or land use planning) aspects of planning systems (the main interest of member states) and the role of planning in coordinating the territorial impacts of sectoral policies (spatial planning) which is of more of interest to the EU.

Subsequently, the publication of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) (CSD, 1999) raised awareness of the notion of 'the spatial planning approach' promoted by the EU (Nordregio et al., 2006). The ESDP called for integrated spatial development to be delivered through cooperation vertically between levels of government and horizontally among sectoral policies to coordinate their spatial impacts, and broad engagement of citizens and stakeholders on spatial development. Planning was to 'spatialise' sectoral policy. Enhanced cooperation was to be directed towards delivering more balanced development, parity of access to services, and protection of critical assets. From the above one can understand how planning can be conceptualised by the EU institutions as securing 'coordination between various sectoral policies' (CEC, 1999, p. 7; Zonneveld et al., 2012). This role involves vertical coordination between administrative levels, horizontal coordination between sectoral policies, and coordination across government jurisdictions, that is, cross-border and transnational cooperation (Davoudi et al., 2008). In the context of new public management with less directive government, we might add the importance of coordinating public, private and civil society actions (Hammerschmid et al., 2019).

Another term, 'territorial governance', was introduced by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in its 2001 Territorial Outlook (Stead, 2014) and was taken up in the Territorial Agenda of

the European Union, which advocated 'intensive and continuous dialogue between all stakeholders of territorial development' (MUDTCEU, 2007: 2).[3] The explanation of 'territorial governance' is very similar to the meaning of the 'spatial planning approach', that is, a 'place-based, territorially sensitive and integrated approach to policies, to improve the performance of actions on all levels and create synergies between different types of policy interventions.' (Van Well and Schmitt, 2016, p. 7). Its core elements are coordination of actions, integrating sectoral policies, mobilising stakeholders, and adaptive instruments (Schmitt et al., 2013; Schmitt and Van Well, 2016). This definition resonates well with the spatial planning approach and conceptualising spatial planning as the 'governance of place' (Healey, 2010b; Schmitt and Wiechmann, 2018).

These developments correspond to wider changes in several European countries where the power of governments is fragmented, and where market and civil society actors have become more significant in policy-making. In this messy decision-making environment where parts of government give way to governance, planning theory and practice embraced a mediation role. It has become obvious that the traditional 'plan and control approach' to managing spatial development is for the large part redundant. Consequently, a rethinking of the notion of planning has changed; the formal and informal institutions have had to respond to the changing conditions.[4] Planning instruments have tended to become more adaptive and indicative to be flexible in the process of mediation and cooperation. It may be that these trends have been recognised, because the Territorial Agenda 2030 (MSPTD, 2020), whilst emphasising strongly the importance of good governance for integrated urban development, also now 'underlines the importance of spatial planning' (p. 3).

Our discussion of spatial planning and territorial governance is illustrated diagrammatically in Figure 1.1. There are no firm divisions between these notions of planning, but we can show broadly how they vary in terms of their scope: from a narrow concern with physical land use matters, to a broad concern with the territorial impacts of sector policies; and from a high level of commitment in the planning system, through imperative command and control, to indicative guidance for decision-making.

Our point of departure in this book is spatial planning, in terms of both the spatial planning approach, particularly promoted by the EU (the cross-fertilisation of urban planning with other sectoral policies), alongside regulatory land use planning, which is under the sole aegis of the EU member states. We accept that spatial planning in both theory and practice is fluid and contested, and so to describe and explain planning practices we must take a wide ambit.
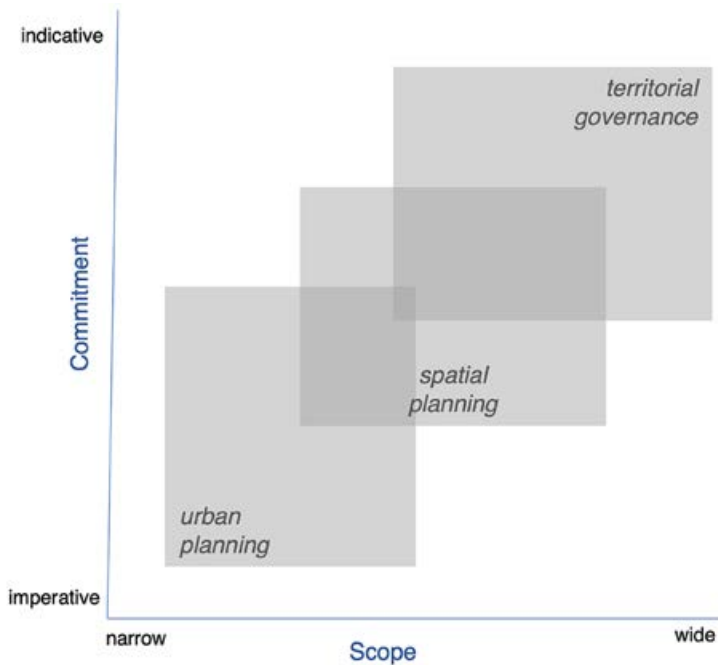
Figure 1.1   *Urban/land use planning, spatial planning and territorial governance*

EUROPEANISATION, CONVERGENCE AND DIVERGENCE

The EU is ever-present in domestic policy-making for member states, and an important factor for candidate and neighbouring countries. Conversely, it is the nation states collectively that determine the character of the EU and its policies. Despite competence for spatial planning resting solely with the nation states, this relationship is no less important than in other fields (Dühr et al., 2010; Atkinson and Zimmermann, 2018). As we have explained above, to a greater or lesser extent, EU policies, actions and thinking influence patterns of spatial development, the character and normative focus of planning policies and how decisions are made in the member countries (Böhme and Waterhout, 2008; Cotella, 2020; Chapter 8 in this book). The EU's influence is often described as 'Europeanisation' (Radaelli, 2006), which raises questions about how this may lead to convergence in ways of doing spatial planning across Europe.

In summary, there are three dimensions to the Europeanisation process: the downloading effect of law, policy and discourse from the EU institutions to

the nations and regions; the uploading of ways of thinking about and working in spatial planning from nations up to the EU level; and the circulation of the same ideas and practices horizontally between domestic actors, largely through cooperation platforms that have been established by the EU. This is a complex set of sometimes indistinct relationships that is difficult to unravel (Van Ravesteyn and Evers, 2004). It is the interaction of actors between some states that has produced the very idea of planning for Europe (Böhme and Waterhout, 2008). Another driver towards Europeanisation of spatial planning has been the formation of an epistemic community, a specific group of experts that grew from the preparation of the ESDP in the late 1990s and has expanded since then, specifically through the ESPON programme and the three Territorial Agendas from 2007, 2011 and 2020 (MUDTCEU, 2007; MSPTD, 2011, 2020). This community is characterised by a common learning process leading to cognitive convergence among its members, for instance regarding EU concepts and policy themes such as polycentricity and territorial cohesion (Faludi, 2010).

Top-down influence has been most obvious, as member states must accommodate EU law, and because cohesion policy (regional policy funding) has had a determining effect on spatial development for the main beneficiaries (Cotella and Dąbrowski, 2021; Cotella et al., 2021). However, since the 1990s, EU states have embraced a more shared outlook on spatial planning through horizontal intergovernmental cooperation and institutional learning. There is considerable leeway in the extent of 'sharing', but there is no doubt that both policy themes such as balanced development and polycentricity, and planning practices that are more adaptable and integrative, have become widespread across Europe (Nadin et al., 2021). Some of this may be more rhetorical than actual; using a Europeanised language does 'not necessarily mean that planning practices are Europeanised as a result' (Dühr et al., 2010, p. 361).

Evidence of this process of Europeanisation of spatial planning has been detected in most EU countries (see, among others: Adams et al., 2011; Cotella and Janin Rivolin, 2011; Cotella et al., 2012; Giannakourou, 2005; Waterhout, 2007; Maier, 2012). However, whereas this process, alongside other conditions and trends, leads to countries having more similar approaches to planning – a process that was thought to be under way at the beginning of the 1990s (Davies, 1994; Healey and Williams, 1993) – it remains open to argument. On the one hand, only limited empirical evidence of convergence exists, and it depends on what aspects of the approach are considered and on what sample is taken. On the other hand, various studies argue that the impact of the EU on domestic spatial planning depends on domestic actors that interpret differently the stimuli received from the EU (Purkarthofer, 2018; Stead and Cotella, 2011; Chapters 8 and 9 in this book).

Stead (2013) summarises different positions on convergence in planning, highlighting Europeanisation alongside two other drivers: globalisation and policy transfer; and three inhibitors: national or local planning culture, the dominant social model, and path dependence. He finds that studies on convergence take different positions because they do not measure the same things. They give emphasis variously to policy goals; planning principles; the content of policy, methods and instruments; and outcomes. Whilst there is now more similarity in the espoused goals of planning, Stead concludes that convergence 'appears not to have occurred to a great extent' (p. 27). Planning culture, embedded in the social model, trumps the other forces at play and weakens the influence of Europeanisation.

Nonetheless, there is no doubt that there have been changes in Central and Eastern European EU member states following accession, and the receipt of high shares of EU cohesion policy funding. The same is true of other smaller countries that have used the planning system to meet environmental and other policy requirements of the EU, such as Malta; and those that look forward to joining the EU, especially in the Balkans (Berisha et al. 2021b; Chapter 10 in this book). However, the conditions under which planning has evolved in countries vary dramatically, including in Central and Eastern Europe. Dąbrowski and Piskorek (2018, p. 585) explain how decisions made at 'critical junctures' before or during EU accession have constrained the development of planning capacity in the new member states. The creation of varying government structures led to 'stickiness of institutional paths' reinforced by 'the legacies of the communist era … including low administrative capacity, clientelism and passiveness of local leaders'.

Adams (2008) compares trends in three smaller countries of the British Isles with three Baltic states, and contrasts the flexible or informal approaches to spatial planning in North-West Europe, with the more formal approach in the Baltic states. He argues that there is evidence of convergence, especially in the general trend towards more collaborative styles of planning, and in the adoption of common policy themes such as more balanced development and polycentricity, though he also warns that this may be more about rhetoric than reality.

Overall, our assessment tends towards the argument for convergence, and that Europeanisation is playing a critical part in it. At the very least there is some harmonisation of goals, policies and instruments, meaning that whilst the machinery or technology of spatial planning differs (and it always will), there is a growing consistency or equivalence in why and how we plan.

RATIONALE FOR THE BOOK

What is the purpose of undertaking and publishing research on comparative European planning systems? Our answer can be summarised in four interrelated propositions:

- The global challenges of our time have a strong spatial dimension, or to put it another way, 'territory matters'.
- Governments need the instruments and capacity to manage spatial development and transformation, and in principle these may be provided by spatial planning.
- Widespread reforms of spatial planning systems drive demand for comparative knowledge to inform the modernisation of planning institutions and instruments elsewhere.
- Sharing of experiences and mutual learning needs to be tempered by understanding of the rootedness of planning institutions in local cultures and social models.
- Comparative knowledge on planning systems can assist European institutions in developing policies and actions.

The critical global challenges of the twenty-first century are fundamentally spatial in character. The spatial distribution of the costs arising from climate change, disease burdens, negative externalities associated with continued economic growth, environmental and ecosystem degradation, population migration and ageing, and more, are all distributed unevenly across the territory. We see this in Europe, within countries, and within cities. Technological and economic change has also given rise to the 'network society' (Albrechts and Mandelbaum, 2005; van Dijk, 2020), with intensive flows of goods, people and information across administrative (and planning) boundaries. Extensive and complex flows accelerate the spatially segregating costs and benefits of growth. The resulting polarisation and disparities in prosperity and living conditions are major reasons for political unrest and the rise of populism in politics (Hendrickson et al., 2018). The global COVID-19 pandemic is a reminder of the origins of modern planning in Europe in the regulation and transformation of cities and regions to improve public health. It has demonstrated both how places can experience challenges in very different ways, and the strong interconnections between distant places.

These lessons were learned some time ago, especially in the way they call for injecting a spatial dimension into sectoral policies, and attention to rescaling of planning to match the reality of functional spatial relations (CEC, 2008; Richardson and Jenson 2003). Nevertheless, in most countries and in most sectoral policies, the spatial dimension receives only minor consideration

(Harris and Hooper, 2004; Schmitt and Smas, 2020). What is evident is that the global nature of critical challenges leads to a good deal of similarity among many European countries in the goals set for spatial development, combining the objectives of economic prosperity, healthy ecological systems and social justice. And during the 2010s, goals for spatial development also shifted more strongly towards addressing climate change and the need for resilient cities and regions. But is spatial planning up to the job?

Recognition is growing of the value of spatial planning as a key tool for achieving more sustainable urban and rural development, and to promote health and well-being objectives and enabling citizen engagement in that task (Grant et al., 2022). The practical and political capacity for spatial planning between countries (and within them) is constrained (Janin Rivolin, 2017). It depends on the scope and powers of planning, the extent of interaction between planning and other government sectoral policies, the degree of stakeholder and citizen engagement in the decision-making process, and in the actual influence of planning on spatial development patterns (see Chapters 6 and 7 in this book). Some of this is about political will and the capacities for policy learning (see Chapter 11 in this book), but it is also about the institutional technologies of spatial planning: does the planning system comprise the well-designed and effective instruments that are needed (see Chapters 4 and 5 in this book)?

Reform and experimentation in spatial planning is under way across Europe to respond to critical challenges under complex conditions. As noted above, one of the most important drivers for change is the need to tackle the 'spatially blind' character of other sectoral policies, and engage in territorial governance through planning to encourage sectoral policies to work in complementary ways. Changing direction under difficult conditions for spatial development involves a continual struggle over the purpose of spatial planning and whose interests it serves (Stead and Cotella, 2011). Thus, planning institutions are in flux, generally involving incremental adjustments, but in some places more radical change.

Reimer et al. (2014) point to four main streams of reform: the scope of spatial planning is widening and there is more attention to strategy to encourage coordinated actions, though with widely varying outcomes (Nadin and Stead, 2014); there is more use of discretionary or flexible planning instruments alongside traditional rigid regulation; administrations are more willing to work across their boundaries with neighbours; and planning processes admit a wider range of actors including civil society. Underlying these reforms is a fifth general shift, away from 'command and control' towards a more indicative planning style and 'generative role' (Healey, 2004). We should not overestimate these trends. They are huge changes to incorporate into any system, and especially for those systems that are locked into a rigid narrow regulatory regime. The reality may be, as Nadin et al. (2021, p. 792) say: 'Countries that

already had more collaborative planning processes (broadly the Nordic and North-West European countries) have remained so, and those with a tradition of centralized planning likewise'.

Reform and innovation in spatial planning are driving a strong demand for comparative knowledge. Planning organisations at national, regional and local levels want to find guidance and inspiration for reform, and to understand how they compare with other comparable places. Professionals are increasingly working cooperatively in cross-border or transnational partnerships where they need to understand variation in approaches. Governments are encouraged by EU studies and reports such as the Agenda for a Reformed Cohesion Policy (Barca, 2009) to seek more effective ways to manage spatial development and investment. European integration has provided unparalleled opportunities for sharing experiences and mutual learning in Europe (beyond the EU), but as emphasised above, spatial planning and the overall place of territorial governance are rooted in the prevailing national and local cultures and social models.

European integration has fostered exchanges between communities of practice on how to deal with common problems, and encouraged reform and experimentation in spatial planning. The sharing of ideas is best informed by systematic analysis of the conditions in which the ideas originally worked (Nadin and Stead, 2013). Planning practitioners, researchers and students will benefit from understanding forms of planning that arise in other geographical, economic, social and political contexts. Too often education and research has made unwarranted assumptions about the common characteristics of spatial planning in different places, when the specifics of the form and operation may be very different. And we should not assume that 'planning' has the answer to many problems. It may be that it is not a case of the wrong instruments, but the wrong 'craftsman'. Spatial planning is interwoven with politics. A precondition for effective planning is good governance.

In summary, the rationale for the book is that the challenges ahead demand close attention to how changes to our territorial assets (broadly land, buildings, environmental resources and land use functions) are managed. All countries have a spatial planning system, here understood as a complex set of institutions and policies for managing those changes; and many planning actors want to understand how spatial planning practice works in other places, and how it is changing. In this book we provide source material which explains variation in the meaning and operation of spatial planning, but crucially which also examines the trajectory of spatial planning systems, drawing on extensive research with a clear conceptual framework and a valid method of comparison.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

The book is divided into three parts and 12 chapters. Part I comprises this chapter setting the scene by explaining our understanding of spatial planning in the European context, and Chapter 2 which explains approaches to cross-national comparative method with examples of major studies. Chapter 2 also summarises the approach of the ESPON COMPASS project which underpins much of the content of the other chapters. Later chapters refer to explanations given in Chapter 2 rather than repeating the introduction to the COMPASS project.

Part II reports on trends in the key components of spatial planning in five chapters. In Chapter 3 we review the formal definitions given to planning in law which are so important in setting the stage for planning activity in a country or region. Chapter 4 presents the position of planning within the many different forms of multi-scalar government systems in Europe, and the evidence that might support the claim for a 'rescaling' of competences for spatial planning through devolution or centralisation. It concludes that there is a general decentralisation trend, and more use of functional regions, but it is not uniform and some 'recentralisation' at the sub-national level is also apparent in some countries.

Chapter 5 reviews the form of planning instruments (or plans) across Europe that are used to mediate and regulate spatial development. It takes the 250 different planning instruments identified and organises them using a simple categorisation based on their purpose at the various policy-making levels: national, sub-national (or regional) and local. It illustrates very well the extreme diversity in the mix of instruments across Europe and their multiple functions. Chapter 6 explains the relationship between spatial planning and 14 sectoral policies such as agriculture, energy, environment, transport, housing, information and communication technology (ICT) and digitalisation policy. The analysis reveals several recurrent patterns and concludes that the role of spatial planning in relation to sectoral policies is growing in most of the countries. Chapter 7 summarises some of the key differences between countries in: first, the coordination or integration of sectoral policies; second, the adaptability of plans in the face of uncertainty; and third, the extent of engagement with stakeholders and citizens in general. The chapter briefly reviews the meaning of 'integration', 'adaptability' and 'engagement' and then compares trends in each for the 32 countries in the study. The overall finding is that there are positive trends in many countries.

Part III addresses the question of Europeanisation and the future of spatial planning in Europe. Chapter 8 presents a theoretical framework for understanding Europeanisation. It explains the processes of top-down influence

from the EU to the constituent governments; bottom-up influence through shared discourse and national contributions to EU policy-making; and horizontal influence among the member state governments. Chapter 9 explores the relation between spatial planning and cohesion policy using the findings from four case studies in the ESPON COMPASS project. The chapter concludes that sectoral policies often play a superior role to spatial planning in formulating and implementing investment programmes, especially through the dominant role of national government departments. Chapter 10 considers the Western Balkan region and the implications of possible accession into the EU for spatial planning. There is little known about the capacity of these countries to manage spatial development, not least because of their geopolitical instability. This chapter goes some way to filling that gap by presenting an overview of the geographical and socio-economic situation, the framework of spatial planning, and instruments used. Chapter 11 reviews the main messages given in this book and the recommendations that flow from the research on which it is based for policy-makers and planning professionals at all levels. The Territorial Agenda 2030 (MSPTD, 2020) is used as a reference point in the call for stronger policy learning between policy-makers across borders, as one essential contribution to building capacity in tackling the global crises of the twenty-first century. We close the book in Chapter 12 with a review of key typologies of spatial planning that have been used to organise and illustrate the main differences in spatial planning across Europe, and their future trajectories.

NOTES

1. The European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion (ESPON) Comparative Analysis of Territorial Governance and Spatial Planning Systems in Europe (COMPASS). ESPON provides an extensive source of data on spatial development conditions in Europe. See: https://www.espon.eu.
2. Derek Martin, 2005, personal communication.
3. Numerous official publications have since called for more attention to territorial governance, for example by the Council of Europe in its Resolution on Territorial Governance*,* and in the EU Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion (CEC, 2008), and the influential Barca Report (Barca, 2009) on the implementation of Cohesion Policy.
4. The 2000s were marked by intense debate in planning circles about the spatial planning approach, and some countries made substantial reforms to their planning systems to seek more sectoral policy coordination, although not all changes were long-lasting (ÖIR and SDRU, 2006). Shifts in EU and national political priorities following the banking crisis of 2008 weakened the case, although as explained in Chapter 7 in this book, there has been a long-term general shift towards the spatial planning approach.

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