Reform of European spatial planning systems

Integration, adaptation and participation

Nadin, Vincent; Fernández-Maldonado, Ana María; Dąbrowski, Marcin; Stead, Dominic

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7. Reform of European spatial planning systems: integration, adaptation and participation

Vincent Nadin, Ana María Fernández-Maldonado, Marcin Dąbrowski and Dominic Stead

INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the evolution of European spatial planning systems from 2000 in respect to three defining characteristics:

- integration or coordination of the impact of sectoral policies on places;
- adaptation of plans in the face of uncertainty and changing conditions;
- participation of stakeholders and citizens in plan and decision-making.

These three characteristics have featured prominently in debates about urban and spatial planning in Europe. First, the European Spatial Development Perspective promoted the integrative role of planning in coordinating sectoral policy (CSD, 1999; Dühr et al., 2010; Faludi and Waterhout, 2002), which was subsequently taken up under the banner of territorial cohesion (MSPTD, 2011, 2020; MUDTCEU, 2007). Second, increasing economic, social and policy instability has sharpened scrutiny of the capacity of planning systems 'to adapt to a range of shifting circumstances' (Schmitt et al., 2013, p. 38). Being responsive demands less rigid, more adaptable, yet accountable planning (Jacobs, 1961; Kato and Ahern, 2008; Talen, 2014). Third, the long-standing debate on public participation in planning has been invigorated by a new wave of social activism in Europe, concern for socio-spatial justice (Madanipour et al., 2022), and the potential of digital technologies to open up new avenues of engagement (Lybeck, 2018; Marshall et al., 2019).

We use findings from the ESPON (European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion) COMPASS (Comparative Analysis of Territorial Governance and Spatial Planning Systems in Europe) projects

(explained below) to review trends in integration, adaptation and participation. Needless to say, changes in formal systems do not necessarily equate with actual implementation and outcomes. Governments can say one thing and do another. We comment in places on implementation, but it is largely beyond the scope of this chapter. Other chapters in this book address aspects of integration, participation and adaptation. Chapter 6 considers policy integration by reporting in detail on the relationships between spatial planning and 14 sectoral policy fields at the national, sub-national and local levels. Chapter 10 introduces detailed case studies in a supplementary volume to the COMPASS project main report that gives more insight into actual practices (Komornicki et al., 2018). In this chapter we stand back from that detail to summarise and compare general trends in reforming planning systems in the three attributes, and so give an overall assessment of the direction of reform of systems.

METHODS

This chapter is based on two reports from the ESPON COMPASS projects (Nadin et al., 2018, 2021a). The first source is the Main Report of the project on a comparative analysis of changes in spatial planning systems in Europe between 2000 and 2016. The data were collected from commissioned national experts through two extensive questionnaires. The experts referred to relevant documentation and consulted others in the country concerned to provide factual information and judgements about the state of planning. The categories of possible responses were organised following conceptual framing in the literature, examples of which are cited in this chapter.

The second source, used mainly for the question of integration in this chapter, is the final report of the 'interactive dialogue' project to prepare an ESPON policy brief on the cross-fertilisation of spatial planning and European Union (EU) cohesion policy (Nadin et al., 2021a). The method for this study involved summarising the key findings from the first COMPASS project and other literature on factors that influence cross-fertilisation; testing the propositions through a Web-based questionnaire survey of 51 recognised European experts in both spatial planning and cohesion policy; and finally, debate on the findings from the questionnaire and draft recommendations to all stakeholders (Balz, 2021).

We are well aware that the use of expert assessments can provide findings of a general nature only. That was the purpose of the project: to give an overall evaluation of trends across a large sample of countries. We are not able to account for variation within countries, which we know is significant in some, nor to describe fluctuations in reforms over time. Inevitably, there is also variation in the way that the main concepts are understood (not least, spatial planning). Concerted efforts were made to ensure a common position on the

main terms. Guidance was issued on the questionnaire, with examples. All returns were subject to a quality control process and interaction between the core team of researchers and the country experts. A summary of the ESPON COMPASS method is given in Chapter 2. A full explanation of the methods and more detail of the findings and sources in the questionnaire returns are available in supplementary volumes to the main report.[1]

SECTORAL POLICY INTEGRATION

Governments and bureaucracies of all types continually struggle with the challenge of policy silos. On the one hand, the organisation of policy-making and implementation into discrete sectors is inevitable, pragmatic and, for some purposes, it works. Sectors can concentrate expertise, deepen knowledge, focus on specific objectives, and exercise control over implementation (Scott, 2020; Scott and Gong, 2021). But when sectors operate as independent policy silos, the costs of non-coordination grow. Poor coordination often leads to waste of money and resources, missed opportunities, and sometimes dire consequences for citizens.

This chapter explains how concerns about the costs of non-coordination in European institutions and some national governments are reflected in planning reforms (Robert et al., 2001; see also Chapter 6). Examples of such costs abound: transport infrastructure that leads to overexploitation of environmental resources; urban expansion that leads to housing areas which lack basic services; renewable energy subsidies that undermine local food production; contradictory land and marine policy at the coast, and more. The celebrated examples, such as wasted investment in ghost airports and underused high-speed railways, grab the headlines, but poor coordination of the impacts of sectoral policies experienced in regions, cities or neighbourhoods is equally wasteful. Thus, there are long-standing calls for more coherent policy responses, and effective coordination of sectoral policies that pays attention to understanding trade-offs, mitigating harmful impacts, and exploiting potential synergies (Koresawa and Konvitz, 2001; Stewart, 2000; Smith et al., 2022). Critical cross-cutting objectives such as more sustainable development, mitigating climate change, and resilience to economic, environmental and health crises, demand a coherent policy response.

As explained in Chapter 1, the EU institutions tend to emphasise the role of spatial planning in coordinating sectoral policies between sectors and levels of government, and across administrative boundaries (Counsell et al., 2006; Nadin and Stead, 2008; Stead and Nadin, 2008; Zonneveld et al., 2012). Spatial planning can assist in sectoral policy coherence by drawing attention to the spatial effects of aspatial sector policies, by setting common objectives to steer decision-making within different sectors (Stead and Meijers,

2009), and by facilitating contact between sectors on their combined effects. Consequently, planning systems are increasingly being seen as mechanisms to improve policy integration, and policy integration is increasingly becoming part of the orthodoxy of spatial planning (see Chapter 6). The seminal report by Fabrizio Barca (2009) identified a decline in confidence in EU policy-making because 'the idea of integrated development had lost ground in the member states and progressively in the Commission' (p. 104). He drew attention to the potential of a place-based, territorial perspective that would help to ensure efficient use of resources, and explained that a deficit in strategic planning was part of the problem. This message has been repeated many times, including by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) which endorsed the value of a 'place-based approach' to avoid disjointed policies and unnecessary competition for resources (OECD, 2020).

The same problem has been a priority for a small number of European countries since the 1960s. They have explicitly incorporated tools that can facilitate integration in their planning systems; notably the Netherlands and France. However, the dominant form of planning in Europe has been, and remains, imperative: that is, planning is conceived as a control mechanism to direct spatial development, including the actions of other policy sectors. In practice, other policy sectors and the market are usually more powerful than planning control. Planning is too often disconnected from the real drivers of spatial development, whilst sectoral policy fields tend to pay little attention to how their policies interact with others, or how they impact on particular places. Much policy in the economic, agricultural, health, social and even transport sectors is aspatial. Policy and investment are not made with a view to where it will apply, despite their obvious spatial impacts.

A lively European debate on policy integration in the 2000s led more European countries to address coordination through spatial planning, and reforms of planning systems followed. Changes involved learning about the impact of the coming together of sectoral policies in places, establishing or increasing engagement with sectoral policy departments, agencies and stakeholders. This approach was by no means uniform across Europe. Some countries are more wary of the idea of coordination of sector policies through planning, because of their history of centralised comprehensive state planning and its poor outcomes.

Governments in many countries have seized opportunities for spatial planning to promote policy integration. This has been shown in Europe-wide assessments (Farinós Dasí, 2007; Reimer et al., 2014), in studies of clusters of cooperating countries such as the V4+2 Visegrad Group cooperation in Central Europe (Dühr and Belof, 2020), and clusters of countries belonging to similar planning models (Schmitt and Smas, 2023). In some countries and regions substantial reforms were made; for example, the Budapest Region in

the 2010s created institutions and mechanisms to arrest the fragmented pattern of urban development through an integrated development plan (Municipality of Budapest, 2015; Kocsis, 2015).

Policy integration through spatial planning is a considerable challenge. For some countries it is no less than a paradigm change, from the idea of coordination through command and control, to coordination through collaboration and steering. Sector policy-makers have to engage with other sectors and spatial planning, and relinquish some power. Responsibilities and accountability have to be adjusted, systems require new tools, and professions must rethink their culture. All this has to happen in many countries in a context of the fragmentation of government, and privatisation and outsourcing of public services. Thus, even where there has been strong support for reform and a mature planning system with strong competence, it is difficult to realise the benefits. It is not surprising, therefore, that the actual shift towards the integrative view of planning since the 1990s is mixed. There was a flurry of reforms in the 2000s, but there has been less interest in times of recession. There has also been resistance where there is a strong urbanist tradition to planning, and where and when there are more liberal attitudes to spatial development.

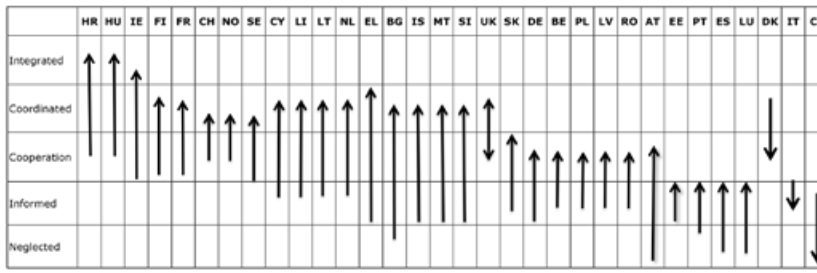
The two studies used here provide general assessments of the contribution of spatial planning to integration. The first asked experts to place the experience of integration between 2000 and 2016 on a five-point scale. The scale draws on the threefold categorisation of policy integration used by Stead and Meijers (2009):

- no contribution to integration (no integration);
- information exchange only;
- cooperation on sectoral policies (moderate integration);
- coordination of sectoral policies;
- integration of sectoral policies (high integration).

Broadly, high integration involves interdependent policies and collaborative working to make joint policies and decisions. There will be formal institutions established to enable joint working within which stakeholders share competences on policy. Moderate integration also requires collaboration, but the sectors retain separate distinct policies which have regard to other sectors and combined spatial effects.

Assessments of change in sectoral integration were given by 32 country experts. As shown in Figure 7.1, the general trend across Europe is towards more attention to integration in the planning system. The integration of the territorial impact of sectoral policies increased between 2000 and 2016 for most countries (28). It must be said that the submissions for some individual country experts, and claims that the planning system is ensuring integration,

does not seem reasonable given other reports of the operation of the planning system in that country. Nevertheless, the general finding that governments are increasingly seeking to strengthen policy integration through the planning system is valid.



Source: ESPON COMPASS Final Report (Nadin et al., 2018, p. 37), amended by the authors.

Figure 7.1 Change in sectoral policy integration in spatial planning and territorial governance, 2000–2016

At the start of the study period the approach to policy integration in about half the countries was said to go only so far as exchanging information. One-third were at the level of cooperation, and in the rest, except one, planning played no part in policy integration. The outlier is Denmark, where the expert reported a decline in attention to policy integration. In the 1990s, Denmark was said to be a country where the comprehensive integrated planning model was dominant (CEC, 1997). By the 2010s, in planning 'a divergence in policy themes suggests a decreasing degree of spatial coordination and policy coherence' (Galland and Enemark, 2015, p. 369; see also Galland, 2012). A declining status for planning in government in a context of fragmentation of institutions, and more liberal policies are among the reasons; conditions which are common in other European countries. Two other country experts reported that there was less attention to integration at the end than at the start of the period. The Czech Republic and Italy reported little attention to sectoral policy integration in spatial planning and territorial governance in 2016; a substantial difference compared to 2000, when attention to policy integration was considered to be at a moderate level.

Seventeen countries had reformed planning during the study period, to strengthen the integration role of planning to a coordination or cooperation role. For example, in Greece new integrated spatial interventions were introduced that connected sector decisions, but at the cost of increased centralisa-

tion, reduced opportunities for local participation in planning decisions, in the context of liberalisation of urban development under austerity policies.

For some of these countries accession to the EU was an important factor. For example, as part of the accession process Malta had to substantially strengthen its approach to environmental management. In the 1990s, a legislative framework was established for planning in Malta, including the requirement for a strategic structure plan, which was reinforced by further measures around accession in 2004 'to bring the situation in Malta in line with that of the European mainland' (Conrad and Cassar, 2014, p. 6733). Overall, the trend towards more concern with integration in planning has been uneven. Often, sectoral policies including economic environment and transport still operate in silos.

There will have been swings in some countries towards and away from policy integration through spatial planning and variations between regions. This was very pronounced in the four planning systems of the United Kingdom (UK), where an initial swing towards a spatial planning approach in the 2000s across the UK was completely abandoned in England in the 2010s, partly as in consequence of lack of attention to detailed implementation issues and professional cultures (Nadin, 2007; Clifford, 2013). The other UK nations have continued with the approach in different forms, most notably in Wales where there have been numerous initiatives to strengthen integration, most recently through the 2015 Well-being Act, and the national development framework, Future Wales 2040 (Welsh Government, 2021).

CROSS-FERTILISATION OF SPATIAL PLANNING AND COHESION POLICY

Trends and future prospects for integrating policy through spatial planning were addressed in a follow-on project: Cross-Fertilisation of Cohesion Policy and Spatial Planning (Nadin et al., 2021a). Despite its name, the project findings are relevant for all sector policies. The project examined the state of cross-fertilisation in Europe, investigated the reasons for varying performance, and proposed priority actions that could encourage and enable more joint working across sectors.

The use of the term 'cross-fertilisation' may seem to present a less ambitious aim for integration between policy sectors, although the intention behind it is much the same. Cross-fertilisation means 'the interaction between sectoral policy decision-makers that creates complementarity, increases efficiency through synergy and avoids the costs of non-coordination' (Nadin et al., 2021a, p. 5). The notion includes primarily the positive efforts in spatial planning to facilitate cooperation and to coordinate the spatial impacts of sectoral policy. The report gives a firm message to policy-makers about the

importance of cross-fertilisation or policy integration at the outset: 'The need for repair and recovery in a post-pandemic Europe places an obligation on policymakers in all sectors to work cooperatively with other policy sectors and stakeholders towards a strong, efficient and socially inclusive response. This demands cooperation and the coordination of policy and investment through a place-based approach' (p. 4). The notion of cross-fertilisation, therefore, is no less challenging than that of integration, but has more realistic connotations of the practice of cooperation and coordination given the power imbalances at play. It also distances the idea of integration from imperative forms of comprehensive planning which are unworkable.

Figure 7.2 shows the general findings from invited experts in 29 European countries and confirms that cross-fertilisation in practice in most countries is weak, although somewhat stronger than the state of integration of sectoral policies and spatial planning in 2000 reported above. The figure uses the same five-point scale, and most countries were placed by the experts in the categories of information sharing and cooperation. There is some variation, and it must be said again that a few experts' assessments of the strength of cross-fertilisation are unexpected. Nevertheless, the general story is of somewhat stronger connections between spatial planning and cohesion policy in 2021, than between spatial planning and sectoral policies in general in 2000 as reported above.

The general finding on the current weak state of cross-fertilisation between spatial planning and investment through cohesion policy is not unexpected. As the report explains for the typical case: 'the (national) strategies and programmes for cohesion policy and spatial planning are prepared in different departments by officials who have little contact with or interest in other departments; they follow different logics and use separate procedures and instruments on different timescales' (Nadin et al., 2021a, p. 13). For this situation to change, the causes of the silo mentality would need to be tackled. No one factor is dominant. The experts in this study pointed to the priorities of political leaders that are inevitably inclined towards economic growth and short-term results; the lack of trust and cooperation mechanisms between relevant departments and agencies that are more used to competing for resources then cooperating; and the generally poor concern for and understanding of the spatial development effects of sectoral investments by those who formulate and promote them. For example, investment in growth sectors may be advocated without regard to the consequence for the places that receive and do not receive the funding. Other factors come into play in varying degrees, including the unwillingness of economic development sector to consider how funding can be used to achieve spatial objectives, exacerbated by incompatible timescales in the economic and planning policy fields where short-term investments vie with long-term planning objectives. Indeed, aspatial investments

Source: ESPON COMPASS Final Report (Nadin et al., 2021a, p. 5), amended by the authors.

Figure 7.2 Overall evaluation of cross-fertilisation between cohesion policy and spatial planning

may undermine spatial plans and policies, such as when sector-based project funding runs counter to urban containment objectives.

Conversely, the study found that there is a problem when spatial planning analysis and policy does not pay sufficient attention to investments from cohesion and economic development policy, which may often arise at short notice. The potential for cross-fertilisation is determined largely by the degree to which spatial planning systems have strategic perspective and professional

capacity to engage with other sectors. A technocratic imperative approach to planning with a narrow scope and rigid procedures is not conducive to cross-fertilisation with sector policies, as exemplified in the Czech case study explained below.

Experts reported that the governments of almost all countries are taking serious steps to improve the efficiency of cohesion policy funding and the effectiveness of its outcomes, in part by connecting investment to the spatial planning system. These trends complement other reforms in spatial planning systems to seek a more proactive planning that engages with citizens and stakeholders and uses more adaptable planning tools. The conclusion from this project was that 'to canvass for enhanced cross-fertilisation is pushing at an open door, with a tendency to move in this direction already visible in many countries' (p. 16).

THE EXAMPLE OF CROSS-FERTILISATION IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

The case study of cross-fertilisation in the Czech Republic provides detailed insights on both the challenges of cross-fertilisation and the potential of spatial planning to help coordinate sector policy more effectively (Maier et al., 2021). Context is important. The Czech Republic is one of a cluster of countries where cohesion policy is critical for public investment. All Czech regions except the capital, Prague, are classified as less developed regions where the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita is less than 75 per cent of the EU average. In the programming period up to 2020 the European Structural and Investment Funds accounted for 42.52 per cent of total public investment.

For countries where cohesion policy and economic investment is so significant, it might be assumed that there would be more intensive attention to cross-fertilisation of spatial planning and sector policy, not least because that investment has dramatic effects on spatial development patterns, and projects require co-financing from domestic spending programmes. The ESPON Dialogue project on cross-fertilisation found the opposite to be true. Experts reported that cross-fertilisation tended to be weaker in countries receiving more significant funding. This counterintuitive finding is explained by experts who say that economic investment and regional policy has high status in government policy-making in all countries, but as the key recipient of very large amounts of funding driven by the EU policies, the competent ministries and departments become even more powerful. A regional policy department can plough its own furrow, overruling spatial planning policies or demanding their revision. In countries with a relatively strong economy, there may be more willingness to cooperate (see Figure 7.2).

Autonomous powerful national and regional economic policy actors are very much at play in the Czech Republic. There is a well-established spatial planning system, but it operates in its own sphere. Maier et al. explain: 'the implementation of cohesion policy and the spatial planning practice operate in "parallel universes", with hardly any overlaps and connections, limiting the scope for cross-fertilisation between these two policy realms' (Maier et al., 2021, p. 7). The result as shown in Figure 7.2 is that the Czech Republic is described as having no cross-fertilisation. The poor state of cross-fertilisation or policy integration is explained with reference to institutional and cultural challenges that will be familiar to many planners. Spatial planning in the Czech Republic is reactive, and only expected to react to the demands of sectoral policies, especially to ensure that all available funds are spent. The loose connection between spatial planning and sectoral policies includes those that have a very significant spatial impact, including transport. Mechanisms to encourage integration and ensure that policies contribute to common sustainability and climate change goals such as environmental and territorial impact assessments are not used with serious intention. The strategic function of spatial planning is weak, and planning authorities lack professional capacity in dealing with socio-economic issues, but are predominantly design-based. Decision-making is not transparent, and local planning decisions are unduly influenced by powerful actors. The perpetuation of these conditions comes down to institutional and professional planning cultures that conceive of spatial planning in terms of top-down control and competition between sectors, with little concern for the interdependence of actions.

There is no simple solution to these challenges. Improving performance will require action on many fronts, and especially in education and training of the planning body. This is possible because, as Maier et al. (2021) explain, there are opportunities for closer integration in the Czech Republic and other countries like it. Spatial planning has a statutory position in government, with good coverage of plans and policies and planning authorities. Legal protection is afforded to key environmental and cultural resources and there is comprehensive data on spatial development. Crucially, citizens are taking more interest in how and where funding is allocated, and with what effects, which will lend a favourable public opinion for change, which we discuss in the last section.

ADAPTATION IN PLANNING

Imperative approaches to spatial planning that emphasise control of spatial development and unduly rely on rigid zoning plans assume that decision-makers have the necessary information to make decisions in advance and that the future will broadly be the same as today. They tend also to be technocratic systems that underplay the role of values in decision making. Criticism of the

theoretical position underlying this notion of planning is extensive (Thomas, 1982; Allmendinger, 2017), but the actual practice of planning in many places has been resistant to change. Practice tends to underplay increasing uncertainty about the path of urban development and assume that it is possible to manage this complexity, which in practice weakens planning policy and implementation (Zandvoort et al., 2018; Skrimizea et al., 2019). An 'adaptive rationale' is called for which enables flexibility in decision-making to accommodate changing conditions and new information coming forward (Rauws et al., 2014; Rauws and De Roo, 2016). An adaptive approach also can adjust to inputs from engagement with citizens (Schmitt et al., 2013; Rauws, 2017), and by adjusting or 'hacking' formal instruments in light of uncertainty and complexity (Allan and Plant, 2022).

Reform towards a more adaptable planning system challenges the foundations of much planning practice, not least professional and institutional culture. It requires considerable professional capacity and mutual trust among the actors involved, and 'good governance' that can avoid corrupted adaptation of decisions in favour of powerful interests (Needham and de Kam, 2004; Halleux et al., 2012). These are great challenges in some countries, and may be seen as threats because they reduce the apparent certainty for the development industry and the transparency of the decision-making process, or even encourage corrupt practices. The requirement for at least minimum mechanisms that allow binding plans and decisions to be amended is well understood. There will be procedures that allow for plan revisions and contrary decisions. How much further countries can progress towards an adaptable planning system depends on the prevailing conditions and cultures, but we would anticipate a general trend towards more adaptable planning, given the increasing complexity of the decision environment and in the interests of allowing for a wider range of inputs to the planning process.

Incorporating adaptability means addressing questions of proportionality in planning (Nadin and Shaw, 1999), that is, limiting the expression of planning policies to those that are necessary to achieve the objective and 'adopting the least onerous means of implementation' (Nadin and Shaw, 1999). This means that plans should be less prescriptive (Booth, 2007; van Buuren et al., 2013; Rauws, 2017). It also entails an overall shift in the 'decision moment' so that fewer binding decisions are made 'in advance' at the point of making the plan in a rigid blueprint fashion. In many planning systems many decisions are committed very early in the planning process, sometimes many years before change takes place. Adaptability requires a less rigid system and more discretion for decisions to be taken later in the planning process when change or development is proposed (Thomas et al., 1983; Faludi, 1987). However, a more adaptable planning system demands more capacity in government

and the planning profession to manage discretion, and effective safeguards to ensure that the discretion is not manipulated in favour of certain interests.

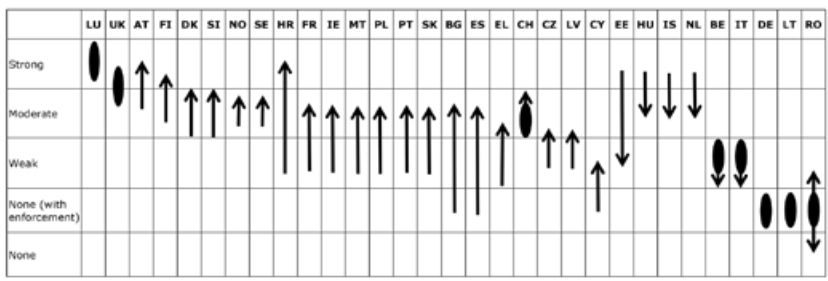
The degree of adaptiveness of planning systems was devised based on the extent of learning within a system, drawing on the findings of the ESPON TANGO (Territorial Approaches for New Governance) project (Schmitt et al., 2013). Highly adaptive systems learn from experiences through formal and informal evaluation, and have mechanisms that allow for changes in response to new information; whereas rigid systems reflect the lack of such mechanisms. We used a five-point scale of adaptiveness to assess trends in adaptive planning as follows:

- strong: where institutions systematically monitor societal changes and the impact of policies, learn from experience, and revise the form, content or processes of planning;
- moderate: some evidence of learning from experience, resulting in revision of limited aspects of policy;
- weak: little learning from experience, mostly rigid instruments that are not easily revised;
- none (with enforcement): no adaptiveness of policy instruments but enforcement of rigid policies; and
- none: no adaptiveness within formal governance regimes but deviations from plans and policies occurs informally (for example, informal development).

Figure 7.3 gives a summary of the responses from experts, showing change in adaptiveness between 2000 and 2016. There is a general tendency towards increasing adaptiveness in spatial planning in Europe, though this is by no means uniform. In some countries there was little change, or a trend towards less adaptable planning. There seems to be no pattern in the findings in terms of geography.

At the beginning of the period, 18 countries (of 31 that provided a response on this question) reported either that the degree of adaptiveness was weak or that there was no adaptiveness at all. As anticipated, there was a general shift towards more adaptable systems by the end of the period, with 20 countries moving in that direction. In general, planning instruments and procedures have been reformed to allow them to respond to changing conditions and new information. There have also been suggestions that planning policies are more varied according to place and are more distinctive in the face of the uniqueness of places, and are learning by doing through monitoring of outcomes (Ahern et al., 2014). Three countries (Bulgaria, Croatia and Spain) increased their degree of adaptiveness at a higher pace than others during the selected period.

Most of the countries where an adaptive approach was reported meet the requirements noted above: an established planning profession with adequate capacity in planning authorities and a generally trusted system of good governance. Eight countries were reported to have or be close to having a high degree of adaptative capability in planning. With one exception, they are rich countries in the North-West of Europe with mature well-developed stable planning institutions (Austria, Denmark, Finland, Luxembourg, Norway, Sweden and the UK, Croatia is the exception). The UK is the only country that has a discretionary system where there are no legally binding regulation plans. Decisions are made as proposals come forward, based on policies and broad spatial allocations made in plans. Decisions are plan-led, but the fundamental principle of the system is that decisions are allowed contrary to the plan if there are very good reasons for doing so, and subject to public safeguards that maintain probity. This is not making a revision or amendment to the plan, as in the more common imperative systems. The policy does not need to change, as the decision-making process gives discretion to vary from the plan, thus it is known as a discretionary system. The degree of negotiation required in this type of system is one reason why the UK has the largest body of professionally qualified planners in Europe.



Note: Arrows show change over time and are reproduced directly from the country responses.
Source: ESPON COMPASS Final Report (Nadin et al., 2018 p. 39), amended by the authors.

Figure 7.3 Trends for adaptiveness in spatial planning, 2000–2016

The countries that are reported to have weak or no adaptiveness (Belgium, Cyprus, Estonia, Germany, Italy, Lithuania and Romania) have rigid planning systems with little opportunity to revise decisions. This is not to say that they also lack good governance: other factors will come into play. For example, in Germany there are incentives for more adaptability, including the general shift to planning as network governance. Nevertheless, there is a 'reluctance towards change' in a 'well-entrenched and generally accepted formal system' (Münter and Reimer, 2023, p. 15). The difficulty in adapting policies and plans

in the formal system has led to the creation of alternative informal approaches to stating planning policies that have become increasingly important (Reimer et al., 2014). This is a trend, however, that can be observed as well, for instance, particularly in Sweden and Denmark, and to a somewhat lesser extent in Finland and Norway (Schmitt and Smas, 2019).

Four countries report that formally strong adaptiveness declined over the period (Estonia, Hungary, Iceland and the Netherlands). The reasons will be specific to the countries, but common factors are the political desire for more direct control over implementation in the face of austerity policies in the 2010s, and decentralisation and fragmentation of planning competences.

A prominent example, although not included in the main part of the study, is Serbia, where 28 per cent of the buildings in the country are 'illegal structures', initially tolerated by the former communist regime and arising from practices that have not been tackled by successors (Zeković et al., 2015). In the capital, Belgrade, land use regulation has comprehensively failed to control urban sprawl because it not assumed 'the key role in mitigating market forces … [and] the basis of all failures was the poor use of instruments such as zoning regulations' (Zeković et al., 2015, p. 76). Other factors come into play such as lack of planning capacity and out-of-date plans. There is more explanation in Chapter 9.

PARTICIPATION OF CITIZENS AND STAKEHOLDERS

Citizen engagement has for decades been a prominent issue for spatial planning. The theories and practice of public participation have been debated *ad nauseum*. Forms of participation are diverse, so much so that for some purposes it is more appropriate to talk of engagement, encompassing informing, consultation, participation and co-creation. Like the planning system as a whole, engagement practices are embedded in the prevailing social model. Over the long-term horizon in many countries they have followed the wave of thinking from blueprint to communicative forms of planning (Lane, 2005).

Until the 1960s wider participation in the making of spatial plans and decisions was limited to experts, and they were usually men. This began to change from the 1960s when societies in Europe faced social unrest, public protests and fundamental social change. In the West this was driven by anti-war sentiment, social disparities, and the civil and human rights movement in the context of increasing affluence and a younger more educated population. In North-West Europe, social change engendered demands and expectations of wider engagement in political processes beyond the formal election cycle. This included planning; indeed, insensitive urban development proposals involving displacement were often the focal point for protests in cities. Governments introduced mechanisms for direct citizen participation in planning and decision-making

bypassing elected representatives. For example, in the UK a major review of the planning system (PAG, 1965) called for plans to be fully debated in public, with extensive opportunities for consultation and representations to be made. These proposals were accepted and statutory participation in planning came into force in 1968. Similar forms of dissent in the former Soviet countries of Central and Eastern Europe were harshly repressed, and here it was not until the 1990s and 2000s that planning became more open to public involvement. The legacy of decades of detachment of citizens from planning decisions holds back engagement initiatives in the formal planning process.

The degree of citizen engagement is driven by events, so we should not expect to see a uniform expansion of measures to open the planning system to public involvement over time. At times, such as in the 1960s in North-West Europe, there will be a burst of activity or innovation in engagement. A case in point is the period following the 2008 banking crisis, when public expenditure in many countries was curtailed, and austerity measures and liberal policies on investment in urban economic development were introduced by national governments, in some countries at the behest of the International Monetary Fund. This exacerbated regional disparities, and highlighted the effect of policies that have long supported growth in leading regions and cities at the expense of lagging regions. Drawing on Rodriguez-Pose (2018), Nadin et al. (2021b) explain how this led to 'the rise of populist and anti-democratic political discourses [and] an erosion and disenchantment with democracy … driven by feelings of powerlessness about being "left behind" or living in "places that don't matter", as evidenced by the surge in the populist vote in economically struggling cities and regions' (p. 795).

The opportunities opened up by digital social media have enabled another spate of initiatives from local governments that expand opportunities for citizen engagement and expand the types of people engaged (Conroy and Evans-Crowley, 2006; Kleinhans et al., 2015). They include relatively inexpensive web-based tools for mapping, collecting evidence, sharing information and voting on development options. Other initiatives include participatory budgeting where part of the public spending for implementation of development schemes is delegated to representative community groups either directly for the groups' consideration or through voting on priorities (Sintomer et al., 2008); and living labs where proposals are developed through shared contributions of experts and citizens in co-production and co-design (Puerari et al., 2018).

The general trends in citizen engagement summarised here need to be understood in the light of the complex nature of citizen engagement in planning, and what it brings to planning. From a pragmatic point of view, engagement can bring much-needed knowledge into the planning process, to build trust between citizens, practitioners and politicians, to create a sense of ownership

of the plan among stakeholders which in turn can assist in the implementation phase when the stakeholders may need to act and citizens accept change, and to avoid unnecessary confrontation with objectors (Head, 2007).

The normative justification is connected to democratic ideals and good governance (Tuler and Webler, 1999), even though there is a tension between direct engagement (participatory governance) and the institutions of representative democracy. Planning is an inherently political process involving value judgements and often the very direct allocation of costs and benefits in society. The costs can sometimes be catastrophic for those affected, and the benefits endless. The use of a general public interest justification for planning has long since ceased to have purchase in Europe. More fragmented individualised societies and the ever-growing web of interests and stakeholders is at times conflicting and at times complementary, but rarely assembles as a general unified public interest. Planning in an open society involves much mediation and negotiation among stakeholders (Lane, 2005). Citizen engagement is a necessary prerequisite for achieving more social justice and the just city (Fainstein, 2014).

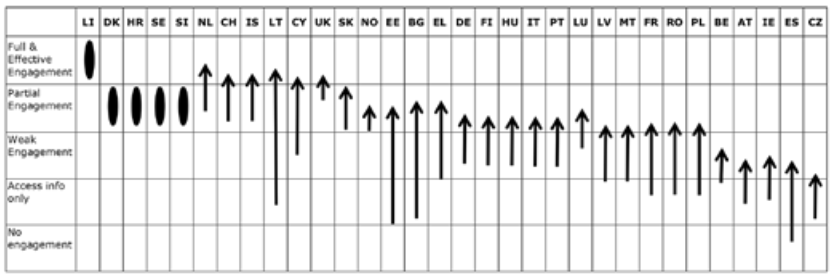
However, citizen engagement is not a sufficient input to guarantee those outcomes. There are many cases where extensive engagement, whether part of formal planning process or protests outside of it, have not led to the desired outcomes because other interests prevail, or because the participation may be more symbolic reassurance than a meaningful act. Thus, there is scepticism about what engagement actually delivers (Brownill and Carpenter, 2007). Brownill and Parker argue that even if the formal mechanisms for participation are in place 'participation is not always desirable in practice, unless certain key considerations have been recognized and are transparent and unless genuine efforts to empower feature in participatory design' (Brownill and Parker, 2010, p. 281). Others question whether engagement has achieved significant democratisation of planning and procedural or justice outcomes (Sorensen and Sagaris, 2010; Head, 2007; Maier, 2001; Shipley and Utz, 2012).

The collection of data for comparison across 32 countries on trends in engagement employs a five-point scale. The criteria for assigning categories were explained to experts with examples. The levels are:

- full and effective engagement (citizens actively participate in the preparation and adoption of planning instruments at all stages of the process);
- engagement in certain aspects or stages of the planning process (such as provisions for citizens to object when a plan is adopted);
- weak engagement (citizens passively only engaged in consultation with planning authorities);
- access to information only, where the planning authority disseminates news about a planning process;

- no engagement of citizens in spatial planning (SP) and territorial governance processes at all.

The general findings summarised in Figure 7.4 show that all countries were considered to have strengthened citizen engagement in spatial planning between 2000 and 2016. However, for many countries the improvements are from a low base. It is perhaps unexpected to find that in 2000 the majority of the countries in the study, 21 of 32, were reported to have little involvement of citizens in the planning process.



Source: ESPON COMPASS Final Report (Nadin et al., 2018, p. 38), amended by the authors.

Figure 7.4 Change in citizen engagement in spatial planning and territorial governance processes, 2000–2016

The overall situation has improved markedly, and that is confirmed in other studies (Hossu et al., 2022). However, only four countries had full and effective engagement of citizens in 2016. Five countries were considered by experts to have weak engagement at the end of the period, and most of the rest do not get beyond partial engagement.

There is no single explanation for the differences between countries: they have specific characteristics that have come into play. Some countries experienced authoritarian rule for decades after the World War II which creates a weak participation culture that may take generations to shift. Direct participation of citizens in the planning process has generally emerged later, although these countries figure among both those that engage the most and those that engage the least. In contrast, mobilising participative democracy through citizen engagement is only one side of the coin of the relationship between citizens and government. In the Nordic countries and the Netherlands there is well-established trust in representative democracy and the role of planning in local and regional government. In these cases, participation in planning has tended to be more indirect through political representatives. Municipalities and provincial or regional governments have been the dominant actors in urban

development and able to use planning powers and land ownership to deliver public goods. Citizens trust their representative to act in their interests. There is likely to be less demand for direct engagement, and where it happens it is complementary to traditional political representation.

CONCLUSION

This review of how governments are dealing with policy integration, adaptation and engagement in spatial planning shows that there have been many reforms and that many countries have been reforming in the same direction. Spatial planning in most countries is better positioned at the end of the 2010s than it was at the end of the 1990s to inject a spatial dimension into sector policies, to cope more effectively with uncertainty, and to allow citizens meaningful participation in decision-making. The findings suggest that common European, if not global, conditions are having effect alongside each country's unique circumstances. There is much in common in the forces that are demanding a response in planning. Among these we should note the general trends towards more liberal economic policies, an increased role for the private sector alongside a smaller state (Gemenetzi, 2022), the revival of political activism in many ways, and the fragmentation of government in many places with a general decentralisation trend from national government. European policy and mutual learning between countries and their planners have also played a part. Where the planning system has not been reformed to meet these challenges, then informal instruments have filled the vacuum. The summary above, especially the figures, obviously oversimplifies the complex swings and sometimes abrupt changes, and overplays consistency. We should remember that the 2008 banking crisis came in the middle of the study period and has dominated reforms in some countries up to the 2020s. The traumas of COVID-19 and now the war in Ukraine presage another period of change, perhaps one where cohesion and collaboration will be paramount.

NOTE

1. Much more detail on the method and project findings is available on the ESPON COMPASS project webpage: https://www.espon.eu/planning-systems.

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