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Integrated, adaptive and participatory spatial planning: trends across Europe

Vincent Nadin[a] ⓘ, Dominic Stead[b] ⓘ, Marcin Dąbrowski[c] ⓘ and Ana Maria Fernandez-Maldonado[d] ⓘ

ABSTRACT
Whether spatial planning systems are equipped to cope with contemporary regional and urban challenges is strongly dependent on their capacity to promote integration between policy sectors, to respond adaptively to changing societal and political conditions, and to involve and engage citizens in decision-making processes. This paper examines and compares how these capacities have evolved in European countries since the start of the 21st century. The findings indicate that many countries have made reforms to spatial planning with significant implications for their capacity to promote integrated, adaptive and collective planning decisions.

KEYWORD
spatial planning; policy integration; adaptiveness; citizen engagement; Europe

INTRODUCTION

This contribution to the *Regional Studies* special issue on regional planning interests, institutions and relations provides an account of recent developments in spatial planning in Europe and an analysis of how these changes affect a government's ability and capacity to deliver integrated, adaptive and collective planning decisions. The three central issues of integration, adaption and participation are increasingly important when dealing with wicked problems such as climate change, energy security and social injustice. Connecting the changing nature of spatial planning to broader processes of political, economic and societal change, this paper provides a new international perspective on the evolution of urban and regional planning in Europe based on the findings from a large comparative study.

One of the first comprehensive comparisons and assessments of the processes and practices of spatial planning in Europe was published by the European Commission in 1997: *The EU Compendium of Spatial Planning Systems*

and Policies (Commission of the European Communities (CEC), 1997). Since then, there have been many substantial changes to processes and practices across Europe. Some of the most fundamental reforms took place in the former Communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe (Nedović-Budić, 2001), but changes to specific elements of spatial planning systems were widespread across the whole of Europe (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2017). The reforms have played out differently in specific countries, and even in different regions (Stead, 2013; Stead & Cotella, 2011). Some authors have explained the trajectories of change according to structuring factors such as path dependency, professional cultures and social models (Knieling & Othengrafen, 2015; Nadin, 2012; Nadin & Stead, 2008; Stead, 2013).

Of the comparative studies of spatial planning since the publication of the 1997 compendium, the review by Reimer et al. (2014) of 12 European countries is one of the most thorough. The review reveals five common and

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interconnected directions of reform in relation to scope, tools, scales, actors and policy styles. First, the scope of spatial planning has generally widened to become more strategic. In essence, governments have used visioning and multi-actor collaboration, alongside regulation, in a deliberative planning process to encourage more coordinated action to shape spatial development (Albrechts, 2001, 2015; Albrechts et al., 2003; Sartorio, 2005). However, the trajectories of change have not followed a linear or uniform path, and some countries have experienced varying attitudes to a strategic approach over time (e.g., Nadin & Stead, 2014). Second, governments have revised the type of planning instruments in many ways, with a tendency towards more 'flexible' or discretionary tools that enable more tailored responses to resolving the competing pressures of sustainability and economic renewal, and in combining public and private investment (Muñoz Gielen & Tasan-Kok, 2010). At the same time, new institutional arrangements have been created in which plan-making procedures have extended opportunities for multi-actor engagement and collaboration. Third, planning is more often practiced across administrative boundaries, with a proliferation of functional or 'soft' planning regions (European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion (ESPON), 2017; Othengrafen et al., 2015; Schmitt, 2013). This has been accompanied by decentralization and/or devolution of competences to local levels, as part of wider governance trends in Europe (Savy et al., 2017; Stead & Pálné Kovács, 2016). At the same time, and sometimes in the same country, there has been 'a recentralization of planning power to the central state, involving crucial policy areas such as environment, water resources, … and housing' (Reimer et al., 2014, p. 289). Fourth, planning systems in Europe have to varying degrees increasingly engaged more actors in the planning process, including other sectoral policy interests and professions, partnerships with private sector interests, and participation of civil society in decision making. Fifth, many national reforms represent a shift in the orientation of planning systems from a 'command and control' or imperative planning style to a 'consensus oriented' or indicative planning style (Dühr et al., 2010; Reimer et al., 2014). While there is evidence of more participatory processes, more attention to sectoral coordination and a rescaling that reflects the reality of cross-border spatial development, the depth, reach and impact of these changes is still an open question. A key factor here is the rootedness of spatial planning in the underlying social model which should not be underestimated. 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. The effectiveness of planning reforms in the management of spatial development is also held back by path dependency, notably in Eastern Europe (Dąbrowski et al., 2018), but also elsewhere.

Reforms in spatial planning systems have occurred for several reasons. National and local economic, social and environmental challenges have often been important (e.g., industrial restructuring, migration and depopulation), particularly in newer European member states. The risks associated with global challenges such as climate change and economic shocks following the 2008 banking collapse have been important, too. The European Union (EU) has also driven reform, through legislation, policy and funding programmes (Barca, 2009; CEC, 2015; Committee on Spatial Development (CSD), 1999). It has also provided milieus for individual and institutional learning on planning across national (and regional and sectoral) boundaries, particularly through INTERREG programmes (Colomb, 2007; Dühr et al., 2007). The EU influence on spatial planning has been pronounced, but mostly indirect, described by Tulumello et al. (2020, p. 73) as 'an EU spatial planning policy by stealth'. Shifting political ideology has also been crucial, especially what are broadly termed as neo-liberalization processes, reinforced by the influence of market interests, particularly since the 2008 financial crisis (Berisha et al., 2020; Waterhout et al., 2013; Zeković et al., 2015). These processes have often resulted in the reduction of the overall political importance of spatial planning, although there have also been countervailing tendencies, not least the call for strategies that strengthen resilience to the impacts of climate change and other unforeseen events (Thoidou, 2013) such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Detailed empirical information about trajectories of change remains relatively sparse, especially when it comes to recent comparative evidence. This paper presents new empirical evidence from an extensive Europe-wide survey of 32 countries, from which new conclusions are drawn about how spatial planning has evolved during the early part of the 21st century. A more detailed understanding of trends in spatial planning systems in Europe is valuable for the future development of integrated cross-sectoral development strategies and the identification of policy delivery mechanisms. These were key reasons for commissioning the ESPON COMPASS project in 2016 (Nadin et al., 2018), which was concerned with studying major changes in territorial governance and spatial planning systems and policies with special reference to the impact of the EU, especially Cohesion Policy. The project examined trends between 2000 and 2016. The starting point of the year 2000 was chosen for two main reasons. First, it marks the time when the European Spatial Development Perspective had just been launched (it was approved in May 1999), which put spatial development more prominently on the policy agenda in the EU. Second, the year 2000 saw an acceleration in processes of accession of former Communist countries (as well as Cyprus and Malta) to the EU, culminating in EU enlargements in 2004, 2007 and 2013, involving far-reaching domestic reforms in those countries to conform with the EU's legislation, policies and values.

This paper examines three areas of reform at the centre of the EU's policy for territorial cohesion (CEC, 2011, 2015) and good governance (CEC, 2001): policy integration; adaptiveness; and citizen engagement. First, *policy integration* (to avoid the costs of non-coordination) was at the centre of the Committee for Spatial Development's

'spatial planning approach' in the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) (CSD, 1999; Dühr et al., 2010; Faludi & Waterhout, 2002) and later became a central element of EU policy under the guise of 'territorial integration' (CEC, 2017). Second, most forms of integration require *adaptiveness*, or the capacity within planning 'to adapt to a range of shifting circumstances such as declining population or the financial crisis' (ESPON, 2013, p. 38) and to align policy with other sectors or levels of government. Adaptiveness is necessary for spatial planning to cope with instability in the decision environment and manage uncertainty (Kato & Ahern, 2008), which in turn demands alternatives to the dominant imperative zoning models that have been heavily criticized (Jacobs, 1961; Talen, 2014). Third, *engagement* is a means of achieving integration and policy adaptiveness. It refers to the role of stakeholders and citizens in the planning process, which has been a persistent theme in planning since the 1960s (Arnstein, 1969), with increasing attention to socio-spatial justice (Fainstein, 2014).

In this paper, the term 'spatial planning' refers to the management of land and property and the promotion of preferred forms of spatial and urban development through strategies that integrate the spatial dimensions of sectoral policies (Cullingworth & Nadin, 2006). It involves 'active cooperation across government, market and civil society actors to coordinate decision-making [that has] an impact on the quality of places and their development' (Nadin et al., 2018, p. 8). The term 'spatial planning' expresses 'a shift beyond a traditional idea of land-use planning to describe many aspects of planning practices that provide proactive possibilities for the management of change, involving policy-making, policy integration, community participation, agency stakeholding and development management' (Tewdwr-Jones, 2004, p. 593).

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. The next section summarizes the concepts of policy integration, adaptiveness and citizen engagement as they apply to spatial planning. This provides the base for examining trends in the three concepts. The third section discusses the research methods employed. The fourth section presents the main findings from the analysis of trends in policy integration, adaptiveness and citizen engagement across Europe.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF POLICY INTEGRATION, ADAPTIVENESS AND CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT FOR SPATIAL PLANNING

Policy integration

The concept of policy integration is increasingly prevalent in debates on spatial planning (Stead & Meijers, 2009). Spatial planning is often seen as a key mechanism to improve policy integration, both horizontally, across policy domains, and vertically, between policy actors and scales of governance (Counsell et al., 2006; Nadin, 2007; Nadin & Stead, 2008; United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), 2008). According to Koresawa and

Konvitz (2001), the coordination of sectoral policies represents one of the main strategic objectives of contemporary spatial planning. Moreover, the 'comprehensive integrated approach' to spatial planning, in which the coordination of public sector activity is a central feature, is one of the main 'traditions' of spatial planning in Europe (CEC, 1997). Spatial planning systems have been 'modernized' in many countries to better manage horizontal and vertical coordination of policies (see below). For example, 'integrated area development' involves coordinating infrastructure, land development and construction, with social and economic development.

Calls for better integration between policy sectors are by no means new (Stewart, 2000). Pressman and Wildavsky (1984, p. 133) note that 'no suggestion for reform is more common than "what we need is more coordination"'. Various trends and developments in government make the management of sectoral policies more important than ever but at the same time more complex and more difficult to achieve than before. According to Peters (1998), these include the increasing interdependence between government and society, the growing number of actors and agencies involved in policy-making processes, the increasing influence of external bodies on government, decentralization of government and the division of responsibilities, and the increasing number of cross-cutting issues that government addresses. Key arguments for more integrated sectoral policies include:

- Promoting synergies (win–win solutions) between sectors.
- Reducing duplication in the policy-making process, both horizontally and vertically.
- Promoting consistency between policies in different sectors (horizontal) and at different levels of decision-making (vertical).
- Improving the achievement of cross-cutting goals or objectives.
- Giving more focus to the achievement of a government's overall goals rather than the achievement of narrower sector-oriented goals.
- Promoting innovation in policy development and implementation.
- Encouraging greater understanding of the effects of policies on other sectors.

In reviewing the concept of policy integration in the context of spatial planning, Stead and Meijers (2009) distinguish three degrees of policy integration: policy cooperation; policy coordination; and policy integration. In general, policy integration involves more interaction between actors, more formal institutional arrangements and more resources. Policy integration often requires stakeholders to give up more autonomy and can be more time consuming than policy cooperation or policy coordination. In terms of outputs, policy integration leads to joint decisions and/or actions and outcomes that may be quite different from the initial preferred outcomes, whereas coordination leads to adjusted policies or goals that remain

separate and distinct. This distinction is used to construct a scale for examining policy integration in the analysis below.

While the need for integration across sectors, scales and levels is growing, the capacity to respond is arguably shrinking due the rigidity of administrative and political borders, and the strength of sectoral interests and preferences for small-scale solutions (Stead & Meijers, 2009). The fragmentation of governance represents a key challenge for policy integration. For example, the hollowing out and contractualization of government not only increases the number of actors involved but also puts greater distance (physically and contractually) between them. The unequal balance of power between sectors, and the differences in the timescale of policies and programmes across sectors, confounds integration, as do inconsistent goals across policy sectors and poor contacts between them. Overcoming these challenges is no easy task: it requires new ways of ascribing responsibility, accountability and power, new structures for the coordination and management of sectors, and shifts in professional cultures.

Adaptiveness in planning

Uncertainty and complexity in spatial planning is a key argument for more 'adaptive' planning tools and processes (Rauws & De Roo, 2016; Rauws et al., 2014). Authors such as Zandvoort et al. (2018) and Skrimizea et al. (2019) point to the weakness of planning tools that assume that uncertainty and complexity can be controlled through the application of scientific rationality, and argue for an 'adaptive rationale' in planning. At present, much planning practice tends to underplay uncertainty, despite the growth of ubiquitous disruptive urban technologies (Batty, 2016) and the increasing fragmentation of actors and values in urban development.

There are several potential benefits of more adaptive planning (not to be confused with planning for adaptation to respond to risks associate with climate change). An adaptive planning system can offer discretion to decision-makers to respond to unexpected events or opportunities, and to incorporate new knowledge about physical conditions, social and economic distributional effects, and unintended consequences. It can enable reflection and learning in the decision-making process and question routine solutions that undermine creative problem solving (ESPON, 2013, following Gupta et al., 2010). It can provide space to incorporate the position of stakeholders and citizens (ESPON, 2013; Rauws, 2017). The policy-learning aspect of adaptiveness can also act as a precondition for effective integration in sectoral policy-making (as discussed above). However, there are also possible disbenefits or costs associated with adopting a more adaptive approach to spatial planning. For example, more adaptive planning approaches require a fundamental review of the institutions of planning including professional culture and capacity, and strengthening of integrity and probity, which in turn demands 'resilience and malleability of institutional structures in the face of change' (ESPON, 2013, p. 33). This demands considerable collaboration and trust-building

among actors (Halleux et al., 2012; Needham & de Kam, 2004).

In some contexts, these requirements can be regarded as threats to established planning and political cultures. The dominant imperative or command model of spatial planning in Europe has the benefit of a transparent line of accountability. Increasing discretion for decision-makers can be seen as an invitation to corruption. However, in practice, a lack of discretion in decision-making can lead to decisions or actions that are contrary to law or policies as plans are simply ignored or by-passed. A so-called binding plan can then lose credibility and become redundant, even where they may be sound reasons for making a decision to the contrary. Any shift to more adaptive planning entails a trade-off, with possible disadvantages arising from a perceived lack of commitment and apparent decrease in certainty for users of the planning system.

Clearly, increasing the adaptiveness of spatial planning requires attention to these trade-offs and threats in policy implementation. Various mechanisms can increase the adaptiveness of planning. Examples include allowing binding rules to be revised quickly, or formulating decision rules that are less prescriptive and provide opportunities for change, especially where they are supported by guiding principles and supervision (Booth, 2007; van Buuren et al., 2013; Rauws, 2017). Another mechanism involves shifting the time at which a binding decision is made, such as moving the 'decision moment' from the adoption of the plan to the formal granting of a permit (Faludi, 1987; Thomas et al., 1983). The effects of these adaptation mechanisms will depend on the type of system and local conditions, but in general will influence issues of proportionality in plan-making (Nadin & Shaw, 1999) whereby only the most critical decisions are made early in the planning process.

A detailed study of all the mechanisms for incorporating adaptiveness into planning across European countries was not part of the COMPASS project. Instead, a simple, broad and comprehensive conceptualization of adaptiveness was employed to measure the general direction of change. A five-point scale was used to assess the degree of adaptiveness of spatial planning, focusing on the influence of learning (as a result of monitoring conditions and policies) on policy development.

Citizen engagement

Like integration and adaptiveness, citizen engagement is by no means a new concern. Engagement of citizens in the planning processes has been present in Western planning debates for decades, at least since Arnstein (1969) introduced her now famous 'participation ladder'. The role and extent of participation has changed over time across most countries in the world in line with shifts in state–society relations and the transition from blueprint to communicative forms of planning (Lane, 2005).

There are both pragmatic and normative arguments for citizen engagement. The former includes the need to resolve increasingly complex or wicked challenges by exercising the knowledge of stakeholders to inform decision-

making, and to share responsibility and build trust between citizens and public institutions to diffuse potential conflict (Head, 2007). Thus, citizen engagement can be used to improve the acceptance of planning decisions and increase the chance of the successful implementation of projects, plans and strategies. Normative arguments for citizen engagement focus on the importance of promoting 'good governance' by opening the planning process to public involvement and debate (Tuler & Webler, 1999), thereby contributing to a fairer or more just city (Fainstein, 2014) as well as the democratization of decision-making. These arguments are premised on the belief that including a diversity of actors and perspectives can deliver a more equitable distribution of burdens and benefits of urbanization. Common reasons for taking citizen engagement more seriously in planning practice concern the political nature of planning, the atomized nature of the public (with a constellation of various and often contradictory interests), and the growing importance of mediation and negotiation between stakeholders (Lane, 2005).

In many European countries, attitudes to citizen engagement were affected by the 2008 global economic crisis and the austerity measures introduced thereafter. Neoliberal regional and local development policies focusing on supporting growth in 'leading' regions and cities at the expense of 'lagging' areas, provided fuel for the rise of populist and anti-democratic political discourses and politics. An erosion and disenchantment with democracy was 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 (Rodríguez-Pose, 2018). Partly in response to the above, efforts were made to strengthen citizen engagement through technological and process innovations such as digital and social media participatory tools (Conroy & Evans-Cowley, 2006; Kleinhans et al., 2015) for mapping, collecting evidence, sharing information or even voting. There has also been an increase in delegating responsibility for decisions to citizens, for example, through participatory budgeting (Sintomer et al., 2008), or generating solutions through knowledge co-production and co-design as in the increasingly popular urban living labs (Puerari et al., 2018).

Despite such innovations in public engagement, there is scepticism about whether it can deliver on its promises. There is a dissonance between the rhetoric of participation and its implementation on the ground (Brownill & Carpenter, 2007), inevitably underpinned by tensions and conflict (Forester, 2006). Some have accused citizen engagement as failing to achieve any significant democratization of urban governance (Brownill & Parker, 2010; Head, 2007; Sorensen & Sagaris, 2010), while planners lack tools for assessing the participatory processes in terms of procedural and distributional justice outcomes (Shipley & Utz, 2012).

As with the concepts of policy integration and adaptiveness (discussed above), a simple five-point scale for measuring change in citizen engagement was employed in the ESPON COMPASS project to compare trends across

each of the 32 countries. The scale was based around ideas from Arnstein's (1969) 'participation ladder' as well as more recent developments and debates surrounding public engagement (outlined above).

RESEARCH METHODS

This paper draws on primary data from 32 European countries gathered as part of the ESPON COMPASS project (Nadin et al., 2018). Collecting reliable and comparable information from such a large number of countries is a challenging task. Expert opinion was the primary source of data, provided by independent experts who were identified and appointed based on their knowledge and experience of the organization and practice of spatial planning in one or more of the 32 countries studied.

Information was collected from experts via questionnaires designed by a core team of project partners, covering both factual information and personal judgements about trends.[1] Experts were asked to base their answers on their own knowledge, published reviews and evaluations of the operation of planning in the country, and other readily available information sources. While one response was given for each country, respondents were asked to consult with other experts through focus groups or one-to-one interviews to deepen the explanation of specific issues and to check and validate the data provided. A key challenge that many experts faced was to give general responses on complex issues where there are different trends and approaches within a single country, which is particularly prominent in federal states.[2] Because of the reliance on expert opinion, responses were subject to careful quality control procedures involving a detailed review of the adequacy and coherence of responses and requests for further clarification. The findings from the questionnaire returns were also shared with ESPON Monitoring Committee members and ESPON contact points (both involving representatives of all the countries), which led to some revisions. These quality control procedures helped to increase the reliability and comparability of the research findings.

Data collection was divided into two phases. A first questionnaire was used to collect information about the structure of spatial planning, and the changes between 2000 and 2016. A second questionnaire focused on the operation and performance of the planning system, and key changes since 2000. Both questionnaires were piloted in three countries before being used to collect data in all other countries. This paper primarily draws on data from the second questionnaire which contained specific questions about the degrees of integration, adaptiveness and citizen engagement in the respective planning systems.

Unlike the approach adopted in compiling the EU Compendium (CEC, 1997), which mostly described a snapshot of the formal arrangements of planning (i.e., a synchronic approach), a more explanatory approach was adopted in the ESPON COMPASS project to explain the operation of planning and how it has changed over time (i.e., a diachronic approach). Particular care was needed in the analysis because of differences in the way

the three general concepts of policy integration, adaptiveness and citizen engagement are understood in specific national, cultural and linguistic contexts. Furthermore, all respondents have their own particular understanding of spatial planning which influences their responses. To address these conceptual differences, concerted attempts were made to engender a shared understanding of concepts before the collection of information. A core research team, with members from Northern, Southern Central and Eastern Europe, was responsible for defining concepts and devising the questionnaires. The core team also provided country experts with guidance about terminology (using examples). Despite the steps taken to produce robust, comparable findings, it is recognized that much information is based on expert opinion in a field where views are contested. Nevertheless, the methods of data collection and quality control provide a sufficiently solid basis for identifying and comparing key trends and drawing informed conclusions.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Policy integration

Three aspects of policy integration are considered and assessed here: (1) the overall degree of influence of spatial planning in 14 sectoral policy fields;[3] (2) the importance of the integration of sectoral policies in spatial planning; and (3) the general performance of spatial planning in integrating the territorial impacts of sectoral policies. The degree of integration was assessed using a five-point scale, ranging from high to low degrees of integration, based on the conceptualization presented above, namely:

- Integrated: sector policies targeted at similar policy goals and the creation of joint policies.
- Coordinated: clear efforts to align policies, with their mutual adjustment in sectors.
- Cooperation: a measure of joint working without adjustment of sector policies.
- Informed: providing information to other sectors and referring to their related policies.
- Neglected: no tangible relations between sectors or recognition of other sectoral policies.

Sectoral policies that are frequently identified as most integrated with spatial planning include environmental, transport, cultural heritage, energy and waste policies. Meanwhile, policy sectors such as health, education, information and communication technology-digitalization, and retail policy are reported to be least integrated with spatial planning. Similarly, environmental and transport policy are considered to be 'very influential' or 'influential' within spatial planning in most countries, with retail, health and education, and agriculture policies much less so. In both directions of influence, Cohesion Policy and industrial policy are in the middle.

There are strong variations in the degree of integration between spatial planning and sectoral policies between countries, and between levels of government. For example,

EU Cohesion Policy has stronger relationships with planning in countries that are the main recipients of EU funding. It is also integrated or coordinated with spatial planning at the national and subnational levels (about half of all countries) where decisions on regional policy are taken, but much less so at the local level, being integrated or coordinated in only one-quarter of countries. Detailed information on integration with other sectoral policies can be found elsewhere (Nadin et al., 2018).

In 2016, six countries were judged to neglect policy integration completely, and three report a declining interest in policy integration since 2000. However, policy integration became more important for spatial planning in most countries (Figure 1), particularly involving the cohesion, environment, transport and energy policy sectors. In several countries, mechanisms for anticipating, detecting and reconciling different sectoral interests and priorities were introduced or strengthened, often related to instruments for environmental impact assessment (Glasson et al., 2005) or strategic environmental assessment (Fischer, 2007).

Governments in many countries have responded to the EU agenda by seeking to promote greater policy integration through spatial planning. This has been reported in Europe-wide assessments (Farinós Dasí, 2007; Reimer et al., 2014), studies of clusters of cooperating countries (Dühr & Belof, 2020), and analyses of specific countries (e.g., Nadin, 2007). One way in which spatial planning is frequently used to promote policy integration is in forging agreements about common interests and goals across policy sectors through territorially based strategies.

Adaptiveness in planning

Country experts were asked to judge changes in the degree of adaptiveness in planning using a five-point scale derived from the ESPON TANGO project (ESPON, 2014):

- 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.
- None: no adaptiveness within formal governance regimes but deviations from plans and policies occurs informally (e.g., informal development).

Figure 2 provides a summary of the responses, according to the change experienced between 2000 and 2016. There is a general tendency towards increasing adaptiveness in spatial planning in Europe, though this is by no means uniform. At the beginning of the period 18 countries (of 31 that provided a response on this question) reported that the degree of adaptiveness was either weak or there was no evidence of it. By 2016 this number was seven with 20 countries
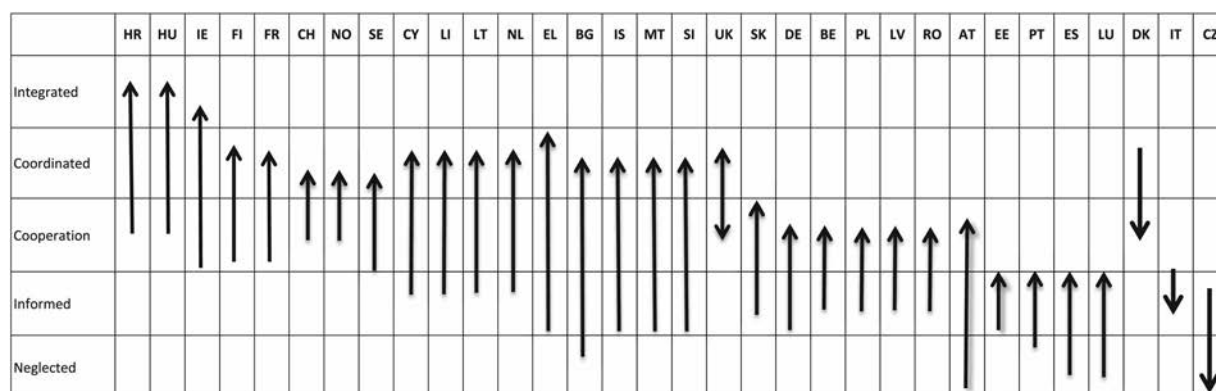
Figure 1. Trends for sectoral policy integration in spatial planning, 2000–16.
Note: Arrows show change over time and are reproduced directly from the country responses.

reporting some degree of movement towards more adaptive planning. Three countries (Bulgaria, Croatia and Spain) increased their degree of adaptiveness at a higher pace during the selected period.

As explained above, an adaptive approach allowing more discretion to decision-makers is dependent on a highly professionalized planning profession with relatively strong capacity, working in a mature and trusted system of recognized 'good governance'. Five countries report strong adaptation in planning, and three more report that they are very close to it. They are, with one exception, relatively prosperous with a long history of strong planning institutions and activities (Austria, Denmark, Finland, Luxembourg, Norway, Sweden and the UK; Croatia is the exception). These countries provide conditions that can embrace adaptive planning in terms of stable institutions and trust in government. The UK is a special case being the only country with a fully discretionary system with no 'regulation plans' in the form of legally binding zoning, allowing variation from policies if there are good reasons, with numerous safeguards in place to maintain accountability and probity.

A record of good governance does not guarantee a more adaptive approach, as is evident from the seven countries that report only weak or non-existent adaptiveness (Belgium, Cyprus, Estonia, Germany, Italy, Lithuania and Romania). These countries continue to rely predominantly on rigid zoning systems. In Germany, the weak adaptability of the formal system has led to the widespread use of informal tools at all levels and at all stages of planning, meaning that decision-making has effectively moved out of the formal planning system (Reimer et al., 2014). Respondents from four countries report that 'strong' adaptiveness capacity has declined between 2000 and 2016 (Estonia, Hungary, Iceland and the Netherlands). In the Netherlands, public policy austerity measures and the decentralization of planning competences have reduced monitoring and learning activities in planning.

Overall, evidence suggests that there has been a substantial shift in Europe towards adaptiveness with 24 of 31 countries reporting 'strong' or 'moderate' adaptation in planning. In most, attention is being given to reforming planning instruments and procedures to ensure that

planning is able to respond to changing conditions or political priorities. Few countries have resisted the shift from command type planning. Planning tools are being used more often to address the uniqueness of distinctive places by treating plans as 'learning by doing' (Ahern et al., 2014) with intensive monitoring of outcomes. The consequences of more adaptiveness or flexibility needs more investigation, not least since some countries report that it is leading to weak control and uncoordinated, dispersed urban development (Zeković et al., 2015). Governments are seeking to tread a fine line between a planning system that can adapt to changing needs and a 'flexible planning system', whilst avoiding manipulation by powerful interests.

Citizen engagement

Like policy integration and adaptiveness, citizen engagement in spatial planning was also assessed using a five-point scale, ranging from high to low degrees of engagement. Respondents were asked to judge the degree to which the planning system provided for:

- Full and effective engagement: where citizens actively participate in the preparation and adoption of planning instruments at all stages of the process.
- Partial engagement: where citizens actively participate in certain parts of the planning process.
- Weak engagement: where planning authorities consult citizens who remain passive.
- Access to information only: citizens are only informed of planning policies and decisions.
- No engagement: where there is no evidence of citizen engagement in practice.

Between 2000 and 2016, the overall picture is a general strengthening of provisions for citizen engagement in all countries. It should be noted that the analysis primarily focused on opportunities for engagement rather than the actual influence of citizens on development. However, respondents were able to provide some comments on the latter (Nadin et al., 2018). No country reported a decline in provisions for citizen engagement, although in five countries the reforms to require or encourage more citizen
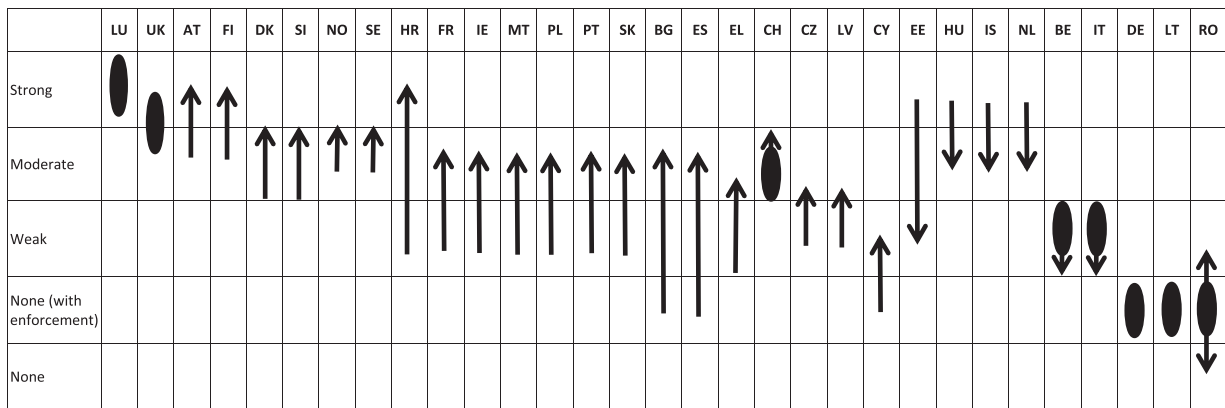
Figure 2. Trends for adaptiveness in spatial planning, 2000–16.
Note: Arrows show change over time; ovals indicates little overall change; and figures are reproduced directly from the country responses. Only 31 countries are shown because there was no assessment for Liechtenstein.

engagement leaves them still in the 'weak' category. Overall, Figure 3 shows that the two most common trends reported are the shift from weak to partial engagement (for more than half of the countries) and from partial to full and effective engagement. The reforms in citizen engagement for one country often vary according to the topic and place. In Italy, for example, where a shift from weak to partial engagement was observed, some regions have a law requiring public participation, while others have only developed guidelines for participation in municipalities, and these guidelines are not always followed.

In many countries, a shift towards partial or even 'full engagement' of citizens has occurred where citizens actively take part in the preparation and adoption of planning instruments. In many cases new opportunities for citizen participation in planning were created after 2000 (e.g., participatory budgeting in Poland; public hearing procedures in Croatia). Where there was already partial engagement of citizens in 2000, the change to 2016 tends to be less marked. The seven countries that reported a move to 'full and effective engagement' did this with some caveats. The respondents were not able to claim this level categorically, but indicated that there was extensive provision for participation. For example, whilst law and policy in

Switzerland is intended to achieve full participation, a large proportion of the population does not actively participate in practice. In Iceland, reforms were implemented to secure greater citizen engagement in planning especially at the local level. However, engagement at other levels tends to be through non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and elected representatives. In Lithuania, substantial reforms were introduced requiring citizen engagement at all levels but active participation in practice is mostly limited to those who have a direct stake in the outcome, and some stakeholders have a disproportionate influence on planning policy. Many of the issues outlined above are common across various European countries.

While it is difficult to distinguish clear clusters of countries regarding citizen engagement, changes in the newer member states of the EU were at least partly driven by domestic adjustment to enlargement conditions and European rules, policies and standards, especially those concerning Cohesion Policy, which require the participation of civil society (Batory & Cartwright, 2011; Dąbrowski, 2014). One caveat to this trend is that the simplification of planning procedures in many countries has undermined citizen engagement to some extent.[4] It should also be borne in mind that the introduction of
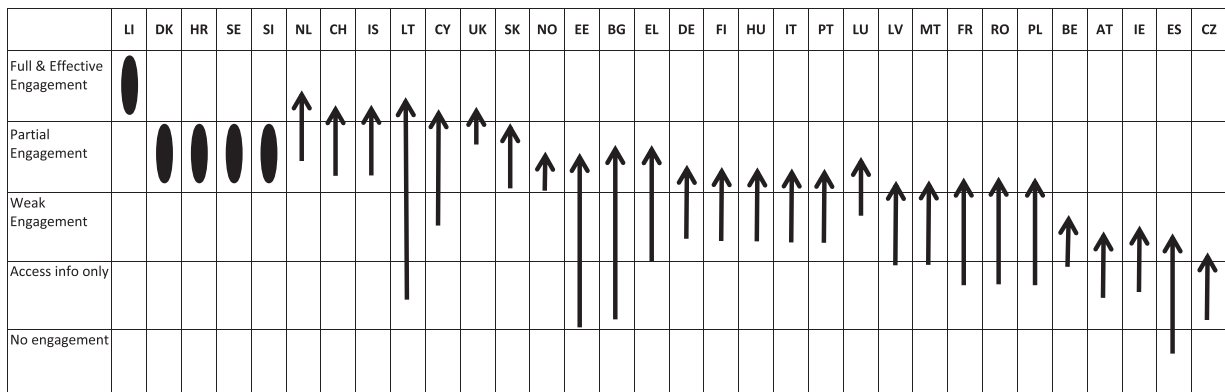

Figure 3. Trends for citizen engagement in spatial planning, 2000–16
Note: Arrows show change over time; ovals indicate little overall change; and figures are reproduced directly from the country responses.

new tools and opportunities for participation of citizens in planning does not necessarily mean that decision-making has become more equitable and inclusive in practice. This study illustrates that many reforms are creating new channels for engagement, but often only for certain groups, and with patchy implementation. The evidence from this study is broadly in line with findings from previous research which highlights the influence of more articulate and well-resourced citizens, or the more powerful interest groups (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004). New tools, such as participatory budgeting, may be 'captured' by better organized groups of stakeholders with a well-defined interest. Social media and digital participation may engage hard-to-reach groups, but at the same time exclude others lacking digital skills. The effects of such innovations are not well understood (Evans-Cowley & Hollander, 2010), and greater engagement may not be effectively empowering (Falco & Kleinhans, 2018; Kleinhans et al., 2015). Barriers for citizen participation may be lowered, especially through online platforms but engagement tends be over-simplified and shallow (Wilson et al., 2019). In other words, innovations in citizen engagement may provide little more than symbolic reassurance with technology or the illusion of social control over municipal spending.

Evidence from the COMPASS project also confirms the view that meaningful engagement in planning at the metropolitan or regional scales remains challenging despite the increasing importance of this scale of decision-making (Brownill & Parker, 2010; Pickering & Minnery, 2012). Citizen engagement thus creates the risk of creating an 'illusion of inclusion' (Few et al., 2007).

In sum, evidence suggests that a predominant trend across the 32 countries is a shift towards greater engagement of citizens in planning decisions, with the vast majority of countries reporting reforms that strengthen engagement in the formal system, although they continue to be difficult to realize in practice. More case study research is needed to explore the extent to which the changes in citizen engagement practice reported, actually leads to democratization of regional and urban governance.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has sought to examine whether governments in Europe are increasing their capacity for policy integration, adaptiveness and citizen engagement in spatial planning, concepts which have been discussed in planning and public policy literature in different ways since at least the 1960s. The aim was to provide an overall assessment of responses to repeated calls for reforms, especially from EU institutions, and to enable individual countries to understand how they compare with others. The study involved difficult methodological questions, not least working across 32 countries with very different traditions of spatial planning. Although it has not been possible to report on the variety of experience in some of the regionalized or federal countries, or the detailed patterns of change over many years (which is particularly important in some countries where political control has swung substantially), the research findings

provide a greater understanding of overall trends in spatial planning across European countries. A clear general conclusion is that many governments have made significant planning reforms since 2000 that have increased their capacity for promoting integration between policy sectors, responding adaptively to changing societal and political conditions, and involving and engaging citizens in decision-making processes.

In Europe, there has been a vigorous response to the calls to foster a new model of spatial planning that has wider ambitions to shape spatial development in cooperation with other sectoral interests and stakeholders using more responsive tools. Spatial planning is generally better equipped to seek coordination of the territorial impacts of sectoral policies in most countries, especially in environment and transport. Meanwhile, spatial planning remains largely disengaged from EU Cohesion Policy and sectors such as digitalization, health and housing. Mechanisms have been introduced in many countries to improve the adaptability of planning and to increase flexibility and responsiveness to changing decision-making contexts. One of the most consistent trends is increasing transparency and wider involvement of citizens in the planning process, although this engagement remains relatively weak in a sizeable proportion of countries, pointing to the need for further development of participatory planning practices. With some notable exceptions, the direction of reform in European spatial planning systems is similar, and the position of individual countries is largely determined by their history. These parallel trends are undoubtedly a consequence of the growth of cross-country policy transfer and learning enabled and encouraged by the EU institutions (e.g., Dąbrowski et al., 2018).

In countries where the economic recession after 2007 was particularly deep, there are indications that spatial planning is less influential in governing spatial development. Reforms to planning tools to try to make it more influential in shaping urban development may have unintended consequences. For example, increased integration may lead to a dilution of important policies, such as environmental, in favour of more dominant economic interests. A more adaptable planning system may allow powerful interests to manipulate the discretion of decision makers in their favour. More widespread and active engagement of citizens may not deliver more community-sensitive decisions but deflect criticism and opposition. For all these questions, the devil is in the detail. The nature and impacts of these trends still need to be examined more closely in practice.

The insights from this paper, as well as the wider research carried out as part of the project, provide a foundation for new in-depth research to explore how spatial planning is changing both procedurally and substantively. The insights also help to identify how and where spatial planning is contributing to managing spatial development in more integrated, collaborative and sustainable ways. More crucially still, the insights help to illustrate the value and role of spatial planning as an important part of governance in turbulent and uncertain times.

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NOTES

1. All questions contained in the questionnaires are publicly available from the ESPON website (in the COMPASS Methodology Annex) (https://www.espon.eu/planning-systems).
2. National experts were asked to report where there were significant variations in trends within one country.
3. National experts were asked to make qualified judgements in relation to 14 spatially relevant sectoral policies: (1) agricultural and rural policy; (2) cohesion and regional policy; (3) cultural, heritage and tourism policy; (4) energy policy; (5) environmental policy; (6) health and (higher) education policy; (7) housing policy; (8) ICT and digitalization policy; (9) industrial policy; (10) maritime policy; (11) mining policy; (12) retail policy; (13) transport policy; and (14) waste and water management policy.
4. An example of the simplification of planning procedures that has undermined citizen engagement is the Dutch state coordination rule (*Rijkscoördinatieregeling*), which was introduced to promote infrastructure investment in the context of the economic crisis. Proposals for large wind farms with a capacity > 100 MW go directly to the national ministry and bypass the regular planning procedures of provinces or municipalities.

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