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Capitalising on the European Research Outcome for Improved Spatial Planning Practices and Territorial Governance

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Abstract: If distinguishing between spatial planning systems and practices, the latter reflect on the continuity and perspective of planning cultures and are concerned with the values, attitudes, mindsets and routines shared by those taking part in concrete planning processes. Some recent studies demonstrated comparative assessment of European spatial planning. Thus, the coexistence of continuity and change, as well as convergence and divergence concerning planning practices, was delineated. Moreover, the trends and directions in the evolution of spatial planning and territorial governance were explored when focusing on linkages between diverse national planning perspectives and EU policies. The relevant outcome of European projects met their visionary statements in general and are towards the inspiration of policymaking by territorial evidence. However, it showed a highly differential landscape for territorial governance and spatial planning across Europe in terms of terminology, concepts, tools and practices. Therefore, the paper focuses on how the most relevant outcome of European research may initiate a reasonable in-depth study of concrete planning practices and substantiate an effective planning approach. Mainly based on critical literature review and comparative analysis and synthesis techniques, the overviewed key research results led (1) to agenda-setting for comprehensive evidence gathering (CEG) if exploring spatial planning practices and territorial governance in selected European countries, and (2) to a set of objectives for a values-led planning (VLP) approach to be introduced for improvement of land use management.

Keywords: spatial planning practices; territorial governance; Europe; comprehensive evidence; values-led planning

1. Introduction

More than a decade ago, EU aimed to strengthen territorial cohesion, thus gradually encouraged European spatial planning policies (Territorial Agendas (TAs)—TA 2007 and TA 2020), the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) and provided integrated instruments for European spatial development, which have been applied under the European Spatial Planning Observation Network (ESPON) projects [1–3]. Experts in spatial planning of a European Research Group joined for collective work and developed a comparative study on continuity and changes in spatial planning systems and practices of selected European countries [4].

Research towards spatial planning practices in Europe addresses different planning cultures. Some scientific contributions clearly distinguish between planning systems and planning cultures. Reimer and Blotevogel (2012) interpreted *planning systems* as “dynamic institutional technologies, which define corridors of action for planning practice, which may, however, nonetheless display a good deal of variability” [4] (p. 4). While a *planning culture* has sometimes been seen as “equivalent to the values, attitudes, mind-sets and routines shared by those taking part in planning” [5]. The comparative

perspective and analysis of planning practices call for studies of spatial planning at the micro level, while national planning systems at the meso level [4] (p. 13). It is concluded that planning practices inherent to the system cannot be drawn from a comparison of legal-administrative framework conditions alone. Therefore, the outcome from the comparative analysis of planning practices (changes in cultures) is essential rather than of planning systems, which are only represented by hierarchies, artefacts and institutional settings.

Based on the studies of Janin Rivolin (2012) and Reimer et al. (2014), the framework of the transformation of spatial planning systems has been proposed [6] (p. 279). At the same time, it was reasoned in the study to apply the designed framework to conceptualize the introduction of a new planning approach and to improve land use and spatial development processes. Spatial planning practices can be identified among five other elements into the framework. Accordingly, it is recognized that spatial planning tools (formal and informal) provide the necessary support to improve planning practices, but positively influenced practices substantiate discourses (e.g., desirable dominating ideas) in spatial planning. To advise adjustments properly, rearranged institutional settings should provide more effective regulations to improve planning practices. However, it is quite obvious that spatial planning practices can be identified and analysed through empirical case studies.

The Commission of the European Communities issued “The EU Compendium of Spatial Planning Systems and Policies” in 1997, which gave some overview about spatial planning systems and traditions of 15 European Member States, as well as enabled the understanding of these systems in operation and identified four “ideal types” [7]. From recent comparative research of Reimer et al. (2014), a “path-dependent evolution” of spatial planning in 12 selected countries can be identified [4]. The continuity and changes in spatial planning systems and practices during the last three decades even show significant shifts from “ideal types” and most of the European countries (i.e., three Baltic countries) were not selected for the mentioned comparative researches.

The objective of the ESPON Cooperation Programme under TA 2020 was to enhance European territorial evidence production through applied research and analyses. Accordingly, the applied research project to contribute to the European territorial and analytical evidence base, through the comparative analysis of territorial governance and spatial planning systems in Europe, has been performed [3]. This comprehensive research covered 39 country cases in total and the results of it have been presented and discussed in the largest world forums of spatial planning (e.g., in AEOSP 2017 and AEOSP 2018). Concerning the outcome of the ESPON applied research project COMPASS, and relevant spatial planning and territorial governance topics that have been critically discussed during international conferences, some high importance research papers have been published as well. Exploring territorial governance and spatial planning systems and trends in European countries in the time period 2000–2016, the study followed an institutional perspective and referred to the concept of socio-institutionalism. Accordingly, *spatial planning* was considered “as the collection of institutions . . .”; *spatial planning systems*—defined as “the ensemble of institutions that are used to mediate competition over the use of land and property, to allocate rights of development, to regulate change and to promote preferred spatial and urban form”; and *territorial governance*—comprised “the institutions that assist in active cooperation across government, market and civil society actors to coordinate decision-making and actions that have an impact on the quality of places and their development” [8]. Even if the above-mentioned concepts are evolving and emergent and their definitions have been developed as “working definitions” of the study, those should be perceived and revised critically. However, the study emphasized the relation between spatial planning systems and relevant practices and procedures that might be seen as territorial governance. In this light, *territorial governance* reflects mutual cooperation among key stakeholders and coordination of essential actions in land use management.

If observing the continuity and changes from comparative perspectives, some substantial problems can be emphasized and challenges for the further evolution of spatial planning and territorial governance in Europe discussed. Dimensions and directions of changes are not linear and show multiple trajectories in all observed countries. The principle of sustainable development exists in every planning system,

but it appears in planning practice in distinguished contexts. The planning systems are heterogeneous and practices developed differently, which makes it reasonable to choose among spatial planning practices for specific case studies and understand better its perspective from new evidence and place-based knowledge for further improvements into planning.

The research focuses on the main question: What are the preconditions and challenges that we should consider in future to improve spatial planning and the development practice? The purpose of the study is twofold—based on an overview and discussion of significant research outcomes concerning spatial planning and territorial governance in Europe—(1) to set an agenda for comprehensive evidence gathering (CEG), if exploring the spatial planning practice and territorial governance in selected European countries, and (2) to set objectives of a values-led planning (VLP) approach to be introduced for improvement of land use management.

2. Materials and Methods

Most of the relevant European spatial planning research outcomes, policies and instruments since CEC 1997 were reviewed and analysed in the study. Thus, the focus of an unsystematic but critical literature review is on the key research results to identify preconditions and challenges for further methodology development of CEG and discussing the objectives of the VLP approach. This work grounds the knowledge of how the most relevant outcome of European research may initiate a reasonable in-depth study of concrete planning practices and substantiate an effective planning approach.

Comparative analysis and synthesis techniques are employed for collecting information from several studies with different contexts (e.g., country cases, sources, and interpreted results from presented research papers (Section 3.1)). The results of synthesis and the applied logical-constructive method contributed to the development of the framework for case studies (Figure 1 in Section 3.2) as well as to the formulation of particular key questions (Section 3.2) and setting objectives for the VLP approach (Section 3.3). The review of institutional settings promoted (1) the illustration of the implementation of EU policy documents and tools and (2) the explanation of the gap in the study of COMPASS regarding the case of Latvia (Section 3.1). The outcome of previously completed analytical work caused the determination of selection criteria and structuring of case studies as well as the assessment and set of objectives for the VLP approach [6]. It is expected that the results of the study will effectuate empirical research and will sustain decision-making in land use management.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. European Comparative Perspectives: Lessons Learned from Topical Studies

3.1.1. Presented Scientific Publications and Debated Contributions

The trends and directions in the evolution of spatial planning and territorial governance systems and new typologies in Europe, synergies and/or antagonisms between EU policies and national spatial planning and territorial governance, as well as cross-fertilization between EU cohesion policy and spatial planning practices, have recently been in agendas of European planning communities. These questions were revised and critically discussed at the roundtable “*Trends in European spatial planning systems and linkages between them and EU policies*” [9]. The main outcome of debates on European spatial planning, which is relevant for the promotion of improved planning practice, incorporates conceptual considerations (e.g., the concept of *social innovation*). This concept was debated concerning social change and transformations. A social innovation emerges from a “progressive vision” based on solidarity and reciprocity values. It takes place through the involvement of new constellations of public and private stakeholders, it develops through the creation of new governance arrangements and it spreads within “networks of co-operation between community agents” [9] (pp. 74–75). The research on shaping spaces of interaction for sustainability transitions looks for transformative initiatives that trigger the rise of

spaces for the interaction between different stakeholders in an urban environment, which is a key element of participatory city-making. Thus, it connects complexity in planning and transition theory to describe the space of the interaction among different urban stakeholders [9] (pp. 202–206). The authors of the research argue that planning perspective necessitates a more fundamental reflection upon the roles and attitudes of planners, shifting from coordinators or semi-controlled planning processes producing policies and projects towards identifying potential societal challenges and emerging alternatives that can be synthesised, strengthened and empowered to more effectively contribute to desired urban transitions. Besides, it has been emphasised that a stronger role, responsiveness, responsibility and more capable commitment from planners to absorb pressuring issues in planning practice is anticipated [9] (pp. 296–298). When redefining aims and tools in a planner's work and orientation of planning practice, it is important to recognise challenges often conflicting from both: (1) Governance, professional-technical knowledge (efficiency and consensus); and (2) citizenship rights, the ethical dimension of planning knowledge (equity and justice). However, in a conflictive dimension (i.e., obstacles, conflicts, tools, opportunities, capabilities), if opposing it to interests, "the role of values is fundamental". A Brazilian case study [9] (pp. 308–309) follows Deleuze and Guattari philosophical considerations, which take planning as a social process. It provides arguments that the planning process should not be guided by models, ideal visions or prescriptions, but by processes of experimentation, which requires investigating problems, exploring relations between elements "and being open to what might happen if ... , what differences might emerge". According to the comparative study on spatial planning across European planning systems and social models [9] (pp. 1247–1257) and [10], planning culture framework, key interrelated aspects and approach for methodology development to carry out empirical case analysis can be adapted to introduce an innovation and improve planning practices. Accordingly, when following a *pragmatist approach* in planning, such elements of a planning agenda as (1) social setting, (2) planning process and (3) planning environment should be included and key research questions formulated properly. Observing European planning systems and policies [1,2,7] as well as discussing linkages between European planning systems and policies of EU, collaborative spatial planning did not follow the ESDP or the principles laid out in the TA's.

The main outcome of *AESOP 2018 papers'*, which is relevant for improved spatial planning practices through the promotion of an innovate planning approach, is concerned with the research results of *governance and spatial planning tracks* [11]. Some relevant papers intended for the special session of COMPASS—European and national perspectives. Thus, observing changes and persistence of the German spatial planning system, Reimer and Münter argue that even if the ability to transform institutional patterns of spatial planning in Germany is rather limited and European legislation and policies only marginally influence concrete spatial practices in Germany, some discursive shifts are remarkable and instrumental practices are bound to persistent traditions of acting [11] (p. 132). While observing planning practices in Switzerland and Serbia, Peric provides evidence and advice on how to deal with complex planning problems (e.g., in the brownfield regeneration process). She concludes that the lesson is not in the policy or method but in the practice of comprehending the case accounts and adapting aspects to the demands of new situations [11] (p. 482). De Olde points out the role of urban and rural spaces as a symbolic construct in an urbanization agenda and planning context. His paper casts the urban–rural distinction as a symbolic construct that is part of a planning culture defined as "the result of the accumulated attitudes, values, rules, standards and beliefs shared by the people involved". Through critical discourse analysis, multiple roles of the urban–rural construct in planning are identified [11] (p. 623). Thus, this must be considered when identifying, assessing and discussing the values and attitudes, especially, in the peri-urban context and in designing urban containment. Healey explores a place and its governance, and how citizens are contributing to shaping its future due to initiatives in citizen-based collective actions. He emphasizes the relational dynamics involved through a version of a sociological institutionalist perspective, which focuses on authoritative, allocative and discursive power (rules, resources and ideas), as these play out in specific episodes and come to interact with institutionalised governance practices and broader dynamics of cultural

understandings [11] (p. 53). Nadin et al. point out that European spatial planning engages in multiple and sometimes contradictory trajectories at the national, regional and local level. However, their findings identify some common trends in the organisation of spatial planning [11] (p. 652). Here it is important to admit that the first two trends refer to improvements in spatial planning systems, the last two—to sustaining spatial planning practices and all together to the potential for the introduction of the VLP approach.

3.1.2. Applied Research Outcome

The comparative analysis of territorial governance and spatial planning systems in Europe (COMPASS) has been recently completed. This applied research project of ESPON provided an authoritative comparative report on territorial governance and spatial planning systems in Europe [3]. COMPASS covered 39 studies of European countries, including 28 EU member states, four ESPON partner countries and seven candidate and other countries. The project focused on substantial improvement of knowledge based on territorial governance and spatial planning, and in particular, their role in the formulation and implementation of the EU Cohesion Policy [11] (p. 690). The project aimed at answering key research questions: (1) What changes in territorial governance and spatial planning systems and policies can be observed across Europe over the past 15 years? (2) Can these changes be attributed to the influence of macro-level EU directives and policies? (3) What are the best-practices for cross-fertilization of spatial and territorial development policies with the EU Cohesion Policy? (4) How can national/regional spatial and territorial development policy perspectives be better reflected in Cohesion Policy and other policies at the EU scale? Main results and selected recommendations have been presented by G. Cotella at the meeting of the National Cohesion Contact Points in Vienna on 20 September 2018. In general, they meet the visionary statement of COMPASS—they are towards the inspiration of policymaking by territorial evidence. However, the project reports a highly differential landscape for territorial governance and spatial planning in Europe, in terms of terminology, concepts, tools and practices [8]. For instance, after questioning the definition of “spatial planning”, this term was interpreted in 24 languages and nearly 100 definitions were recognized as well as, among 32 countries, 255 spatial planning instruments were identified; mostly statutory, with various functions and characters (e.g., multi-purpose tools [11] (p. 627)). The influence of the EU on domestic contexts has been recognised (e.g., affected social learning through laws (structural), policies and funding (instrumental) and experts’ knowledge (discursive)). In general, the outcome of the COMPASS study demonstrates relevance to improved planning practice. Thus, some of the recommendations suggest: (1) EU Cohesion Policy as a spatial planning tool, to promote strategic spatial planning approaches, offers also the potential to promote place-based policy development; (2) a higher co-funding rate for place-based actions that fulfil certain criteria (e.g., participatory processes, bottom-up development, explicit reference to spatial planning tools, etc.); (3) make integrated tools to support territorial governance and spatial planning at regional and local levels mandatory; (4) strengthen the capacity building of practitioners (e.g., professional planners, developers, authority representatives and other local stakeholders) by sharing knowledge about the best use of existing, improved and new tools to create added value and potential synergies with other policies, as well as by providing experience and expertise to ensure mutual learning and good practice exchange; (5) develop partnerships under topical objectives, thus partners from different countries and disciplines join to develop and test policy measures and new approaches on how to deal with specific challenges, and find the best possible solutions through cross-sectoral discussions and collaborative work.

The necessity to implement the place-based approach has been emphasized in the applied research at the European scale [2]. *The place-based development policy* was conceptualized in relation to the challenges and expectations of the EU as an agenda for a Reformed Cohesion Policy [12]. This policy was defined as “a long-term development strategy whose objective is to reduce persistent inefficiency and inequality in specific places, through the production of bundles of integrated, place-tailored public goods and services, designed and implemented by eliciting and aggregating *local preferences and*

knowledge through participatory political institutions, and by establishing *linkages with other places ...* ". The key finding of the applied study pointed out "valuing and reviving territorial identity" as a unique asset and starting point of every place-based initiative. It was also concluded in the study, through the analysed cases, that there is a clear need of changing the mindset of decision-makers, moving from a more administrative and compliance-driven attitude to a more result-oriented and entrepreneurial one in governing territories [2] (pp. 3–4).

Some *developed and provided tools* were suggested to apply for promotion of planning practices and improved territorial governance. The ESPON territorial impact assessment (TIA) tool was designed to assess the territorial impacts of policies and institutions to support efforts to minimize unforeseen negative policy outcomes and maximise territorial potentials. The territorial impact assessment (TIA) is "a method to predict the territorial effects of policies and provide useful insights for both territorial and sector policy-making" [13]. The TIA web tool allows the user to make a "quick and dirty" ex-ante analysis of the potential impact of EU legislation, policies and directives on the development of regions (i.e., NUTS3). The TIA webtool is recognised as a very general model that can help to steer the discussion and cannot replace a thorough assessment of relevant and concrete territorial effects of a policy proposal. Therefore, the question should be addressed to those who care about support to spatial planning and governance at a local territorial level: How could one carry out a territorial impact assessment to improve spatial planning practice when assessing the impact from the implementation of local spatial development strategies, plans and development programs?

Applied research of ESPON on sustainable urbanization and land-use practices in European regions (SUPER) has been carried out since 2019. The SUPER project anticipates an "innovative outcome" through (1) quantitative evidence gathering on land-use developments using latest data sources, (2) qualitative evidence gathering on impacts of interventions to affect urbanisation, (3) empirical evidence-gathering on urbanisation practices carrying out 10 case studies, (4) evidence gathering on possible futures using the land-use modelling technique and (5) engaging stakeholders to ensure project impact by organising workshops and developing a handbook [14]. Accordingly, the conceptual framework of the project shows the acknowledgement of urbanisation and land-use drivers, local practices and outcomes in European regions (i.e., NUTS3), as well as its sustainability assessment. In order to assess the sustainability of development a starting hypothesis was developed to be tested in the course of the project: "compact and denser urban development would lead to less need for transport, less energy use and more open spaces enhancing the quality of the life thus generating benefits and requiring fewer costs—or in other words, enhancing sustainability". Furthermore, a guiding question in this regard was addressed: How and to what extent can territorial governance and spatial planning interventions contribute to more sustainable land use? However, a question rises again: How could one carry out a sustainability assessment to improve spatial planning practice when assessing relevant effects from the implementation of local spatial development strategies, plans and development programs? The approach and aim of the SUPER project seem both quite ambitious and ambiguous when used to address the above question to support a local land management level. The question requires a sustainable land intensification concept to be considered, including such aspects as dynamic changes in land-use patterns (spatial dimension of multi-functionality and synergy aspects), identification and assessment of values (socio-economic, environmental-ecological and institutional dimensions) and stakeholders' preferences of the values. However, it is acknowledged in the case study strategy that only the case studies can provide insight into the local experiences that produce land-use changes in context and the extent to which specific interventions are effective in fostering sustainability (Inception Report of [14], pp. 23–24). From this perspective, both substantive and instrumental questions were developed to have proper responses during the case studies.

3.1.3. Some Critique Outlining the Baltic Perspective and Main Conclusion

Some studies (e.g., COMPASS) include the *planning perspective of Baltic countries*. Adams et al. (2014) characterize it as the one which reflects a "culture of pragmatism", whereby more concrete and specific

issues take priority over more abstract and ambiguous ones. At the same time, towards engagement with European spatial planning and the Territorial Cohesion debate, the professional communities of practice have been recognized as institutionally weak and fragmented, local government structures—as fragmented too. The advocacy coalitions identified as quite marginalized and territorial knowledge communities characterized as weak and fragmented [15]. The evolution of the Latvian spatial planning experience was recently explored and discussed in the light of a previously made comparative study [4]. Thus, the key trends and aspects of Latvian policies, spatial planning styles and tools have been presented and, in a more detailed way, discussed when informing about main phases and turning points since 1990 [16]. The author agrees with the arguments provided by N. Adams, that Baltic countries embody a pragmatic view in spatial development planning; However, is critical about an assessment of the domestic spatial planning experience based on study of the spatial planning system (e.g., artefacts, regulations, institutional settings, representation of hierarchies) separately from planning practice, if not considering significant driving forces, which caused qualitative changes in planning practice. *Regional economic planning*, as one of four major traditions of spatial planning in Europe, has been identified already by CEC (1997). In one of the main comparative studies on spatial planning systems in Europe [17], Latvian spatial planning showed to be partly regionally economic. Moreover, in Latvia, a shift towards regionalization in spatial planning competences has been recognized in the COMPASS study, which appeared different from both other Baltic countries [8] (p. 19), [18] (p. 9). After the abolition of administrative regions (26) and thus district planning due to administrative-territorial reform in 2008, planning regions (5) do not provide spatial plans at a regional level. They develop strategies (e.g., spatial development perspective and guidelines, development programs and some plans of thematic character). Already, since the 1990s, there has been strong power at the local governmental (municipal) level in spatial planning; however, inter-municipal cooperation weakened because of changes in regional spatial planning after 2009 in Latvia. Therefore, at least in Latvia, it is difficult to find convincing arguments towards regionalization of the spatial planning agenda. Latvia, like most of the other European countries, pursue regional policy objectives and regional development strategies, but the characteristic of the regional economy is not and has never been evident in spatial planning. The spatial planning system and practice developed gradually with significant changes in institutional settings in 2004 and 2011. The “Spatial Development Planning Law” (2011) determined new institutional settings for the spatial planning agenda and aimed qualitative changes into spatial planning practice. Since then the shift towards a strategic spatial planning approach can be argued, as all three planning levels (national, regional and local) have strategies. Since administrative-territorial reform (2009), physical planning with legally binding parts of the local government plan has been practiced. The planning style can be characterized as decentralized, integrated and comprehensive spatial planning with a tendency of centralization to recognise the priorities at the national and regional scales [16]. However, the spatial planning of five planning regions is of strategical and guiding character that include spatial development perspectives. Thus, the regional level of spatial planning in Latvia comprises a strategical approach, whereas regional development contributes mainly with a statistical approach. Weak cooperation among stakeholders exists and public activity and participation increase slowly. The further shift towards collaborative and consensus-oriented spatial planning may be seen as a big challenge for stakeholders in Latvia.

Concluding about the outcomes of the topical European comparative studies and provided arguments, it seems quite obvious that focus has been directed more to spatial planning systems than practices, as well as to more general scales than local planning experience. Summarizing on the above review and analytical research towards a better understanding of spatial planning and territorial governance in Europe, it is reasonable to continue with methodology building for case studies and structured interviews to explore the spatial planning practices more specifically. It will ground the setting of objectives and the introduction of the VLP approach for improved land use and spatial development processes.

3.2. Empirical Research: Towards Comprehensive Evidence Gathering

Following an institutional perspective, here references to the concept of socio-institutionalism or “sociological institutionalist perspective” [19], that emphasize the complex interplay of governance episodes, processes and cultural (place-specific; cf. [20]) assumptions guiding planning and urban development, are made. The relational dynamics involved through a version of a sociological institutionalist perspective focuses on governing rules and available resources, and dominating ideas like these “play out in specific episodes and come to interact with institutionalized governance practices and broader dynamics of cultural understandings” [11] (Healey: p. 53). Synthesizing from the key study outcome gathered during analytical research, the main characteristics of the planning culture approach were taken as a reference to develop the methodology for empirical research through case studies and to create upon key research questions for qualitative research through semi-structured interviews.

To address the research aims of the VLP approach, it is necessary to perform not only analytical research when examining a range of scientific literature and documentary sources, but also to involve actors engaged in relevant policy processes. Invited competent experts in the spatial planning/land use management field may provide opinions about local governance and relevant processes for CEG. In general, the participants can; therefore, be considered to be versed in the technical language relating to spatial planning/land use management and territorial governance at the local municipal level. Accordingly, it is considered that a CEG based on sufficient participation and targeted challenges and opportunities will contribute to the introduction of a VLP approach into practice when linking scientific achievements with the most feasible practical solutions. CEG is mainly based on the identification of barriers, bottlenecks, good planning implementation practices, values and preferences, governance and collaboration forms, etc. Empirical research is carried out by making case studies at selected and differently-experienced (historical evolution, traditions, institutions and development level) countries. The specific governing administration as a part of a chosen country represents the experience of one of four “ideal types” of spatial planning systems [7], and during the last decades have faced relevant changes in spatial planning practices and territorial governance (discourses/traditions), which is essential to the research context. It is expected that the knowledge of competent experts represents the dominating opinion of local society (stakeholders) to a considerable extent and gives some discursive influence on research, as he/she is well informed about relevant spatial planning/land use management processes.

The *framework* for performing cases studies is proposed and key research questions accordingly are developed (see in Figure 1) if considering the following assumptions:

- A “pragmatic view” reflects on planning culture through the prism of interrelated aspects: (1) Social setting, (2) planning process and (3) planning environment [9] (Peric and Hoch: p. 1250);
- The study of multiple trajectories of European spatial planning points out four common trends in the organisation of spatial planning: (1) Simplification of administrative structures, (2) attempts to integrate planning with other policy sectors, (3) strengthening implementation of plans and (4) engaging more effectively with citizens [11] (Nadin et al: p. 652);
- The logic of the framework of the transformation of spatial planning systems is constructed in the way to provide the guidance when “structures” define “tools” to support “practices” [6] (p. 279).

TOWARDS A VALUES-LED PLANNING APPROACH

ORGANISATION and INVOLVEMENT	PROCESS and TOOLS	ENVIRONMENT and SHARED VALUES
Administrative structures, policy styles, institutional and social settings, collective actions, social learning	Deliberative plan making, planning modes, formal and informal planning tools, project-oriented techniques	Cultural awareness of stakeholders in planning, shared assumptions, values and preferences of involved parties

Figure 1. The framework for case studies.

If considering the above framework in Figure 1, during the discourse of case studies and further analysis, three *key questions* were formulated. (1) Who and under what circumstances organise planning and are involved in it? (2) What are the peculiarities of the planning process and how is the planning practice supported and improved? (3) What is the environment and how well does the planning absorb the intensions and encourage the actors whose preferences and actions may influence future outcomes? Thus, the first question is concerned more with territorial governance issues and possible arrangements, the second—with procedures, modes, planning tools and techniques, and the third—with a reasonable qualitative assessment of the planning environment and implementation of plans. More specific questions are formulated in the “*Draft schedule for semi-structured interview*” and discussed during the interviews and possible on-site visits, thus the core of the methodological tool for empirical analysis can be recognized.

3.3. A Values-Led Planning Approach: Setting Objectives for Improved Practices

The topicality of the VLP approach to be substantiated and implemented into land use management practice was developed upon an assumption that the creation of positive synergy in managing land-related resources if exploring the territorial capabilities, threats and opportunities (e.g., the effects of urban expansion, multi-functionality of land use, internalization of negative externalities and challenges of a city agglomeration) causes primary necessity for the modern society. Previous studies [6,16] contributed to the conceptual background and feasibility aspects of the VLP approach to be introduced into practice by capitalizing, first of all, on comparative analysis of dynamic spatial planning systems and planning cultures. The recent evolution of planning cultures, its substantial changes during the last twenty years and prospective continuation quite clearly argue towards the VLP approach to be developed and implemented to improve spatial planning as an essential and integrated part of land management. The role of values is fundamental and their assessments and acceptance contribute to reasonability and sustainability considerations when applying the VLP approach. Thus, the domain of the VLP approach is found in ascertaining and acknowledging the values according to their typology and conceptualized participation.

It has been concluded that it is necessary to improve the relevant practice and assess its effects in specific territories based on identified, mainly place-based values and attitudes of primary local stakeholders. Establishing a scientifically-sound framework and providing methodological support will promote not only the internalization of negative externalities, but also enable identification of the synergy that would enhance the balanced socio-economic and environmental impact and improve the governance in the territory. Relevant processes (e.g., formal and informal spatial planning, local development, protection of valuable landscapes and related consequent decision-making) strive for collaborative learning by understanding the values of land-related resources and their most efficient usage. Spatial/land use planners as skilled and capable enough professionals in their positions will face new challenges and need to act as competent advisers to stakeholders. Planning activities without focusing on the planning–implementation relationship should be seen as unprofessionally

guided. A discourse towards a consensus-oriented planning style will promote the development and management of sustainable communities when it focuses on win-to-win solutions in planning practices.

A VLP approach contributes, along with the “evaluation and planning–implementation concept” and consequent principles, towards balancing the foremost interests of nature/landscape protection and new development. Theoretically, two main principles provide the grounds for the improved spatial planning practice and value capture: (1) Make the best possible and acceptable use of land and (2) share the profit of land. To reveal these principles, some instruments are effectuated. Usually, the profit may be understood as the ratio of benefits-costs after a particular analysis, but the value should be captured for absorbing value increase and recovering development costs, for instance. The reasonability of the VLP approach is found in dynamics and potential changes in land values and its use. From the spatial planning point of view, if current conditions in a particular territory are found already to be the best possible and they satisfy all stakeholders, then the VLP approach is insignificant, but, if a potential to change anything in the territory is found (e.g., a new development or its restriction, or protection of landscape/land-related resources from external impacts) and the initiative from stakeholders appears, then the VLP approach is essential to apply.

Nowadays *sustainability aspects* should be attributed to challenges and issues towards an intensification of land use—how to manage the growing pressure of human needs (e.g., food, resource exploitation, well-being), while at the same time minimizing the impact on the environment (e.g., ecosystems liveability, resource renewability, biodiversity)? “Sustainable intensification” [21] is a suggested but vague term that needs to be clarified through land-use policies; however, it can be applied to meet the mentioned quite challenging issues. If considering global tendencies, the context of sustainable development is the same as realized since Brundtland’s report in 1987; however, the focus and content required nowadays is different. Accordingly, how significantly human needs have to be diminished or changed in order for the impact on the environment and land-related resources to be the smallest possible. Practically, the potential for further spatial development should be assessed and then supported by binding decisions. *Decision-making* needs to be backed with facts, actual data and analysis through empirical evidence (i.e., “measuring and evaluating” as an essential outcome).

The VLP approach requires the organisation of expertise for determining the values and identifying preferences through participatory actions and the consensus-building platform of stakeholders. Therefore, the framework for guiding particular processes should be developed with the main focus on the combination of both values and preferences, if considering their dynamic changes over time. The implementation of the VLP approach needs holistic design and methodology. To understand the general design, the framework of the transformation of spatial planning systems is appropriate to apply [6]. This framework is proposed as it conceptualizes the introduction of the VLP approach and focuses on improved spatial planning practice through (1) organisational formations (governing structures), who provide tools for support and guidance; and (2) properly rearranged and acknowledged institutional settings, which provide more effective regulations. The framework implies also the potential for improving territorial governance.

4. Conclusions

In the light of overviewed European comparative research and analysis of its outcome, it has been found to be reasonable to develop a methodology for CEG to explore the spatial planning practices more specifically. It is concluded that the analytical work and performance of CEG substantiate the setting of objectives for the introduction of the VLP approach.

The research aim for case studies is to discuss and deliberate new knowledge about possibilities to improve the spatial planning practice and territorial governance and thus land use management in general. The framework for case studies to carry out CEG is concerned with three main objectives:

1. To examine the organisation of the planning process and involvement of stakeholders (administrative structures, policy styles, institutional and social settings, collective actions and social learning);

2. To explore the peculiarities of the planning process and how the planning practice is supported and improved (deliberative plan making, planning modes, formal and informal planning tools, project-oriented techniques);
3. To examine the planning environment and shared values of the actors whose preferences and actions may influence further outcomes (cultural awareness of stakeholders in planning, shared assumptions, values and preferences of involved parties).

The main objectives for the VLP approach are:

1. Improved, more supportive and collaborative territorial governance, informal institutions and organisational forms as they significantly support formal spatial planning, social settings driven by common and local, place-based interests;
2. Ensured spatial planning–implementation relationship, softer, more flexible and complementing planning modes, formal and informal planning tools, project-oriented techniques and integrated assessment instruments;
3. Balanced planning interests, towards meeting supply and demand in planning, increasing of cultural awareness, shared perception and assumption of values and preferences.

To discuss and promote the introduction of the VLP approach into the planning practice, the objectives should be structured when characterising not only the objectives alone, but also indicate their rationale and tools, which are recommended to apply.

If considering the dynamics in the evolution of spatial planning (e.g., floating discourses, shaping administrative structures, inspiring actors of change) as well as driving forces (e.g., reforms, crises, “Europeanisation”), which influence changes in planning cultures, it is suggested to have some mechanism for systematic assessment of:

1. Territorial governance (ascertaining the movement between both command/control and consensus-oriented models);
2. Planning–implementation linkage (ascertaining the movement from just formal institutionalised planning mode towards complementing informal planning arrangements);
3. Planning environment and shared values (ascertaining the movement between both supply-led planning and demand-led planning styles).

It is hypothesized here that such an assessment will allow for understanding of the impact and integration of national, regional and sectoral policies and priorities into the local spatial planning agenda when meeting the interests of local stakeholders (e.g., housing policies, transport networks and natural protection of coastlines).

Finally, it is considered, for the future, that key stakeholders, including official authorities, landowners, developers, partnerships, advisers and enterprises, have to be sufficiently involved or at least their opinion represented by experts when discussing the guiding methodological solutions and specific tools. Having and analysing timely feedback would demonstrate more demand-driven innovation with sufficient participation and target challenges, and opportunities to introduce a VLP approach into practice when linking scientific achievements with the most feasible practical solutions.

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