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IS THERE A *EUROPEAN* PLANNING TRADITION?

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It is widely acknowledged that Europe was the main setting for the emergence of modern urban planning. From around the mid-nineteenth century, there were important initiatives across the continent to regulate and shape urban space. Fundamentally, these were a response to the unprecedented growth and concentration of economic activity and people within cities, raising multiple problems of health, efficiency and social order. Together the various palliative measures adopted became the main constituent parts of what by the early twentieth century had become a distinct activity that combined reformist impulses with technical expertise. The story was not entirely European because the USA certainly helped invent this new practice. Yet it did so leaning heavily on European precedents, much more so initially than European countries drew upon it. Some imperial territories of the European powers also had supporting roles. However, these roles were largely orchestrated from the hearts of those empires in Europe.

The relative importance of these different world regions in the further elaboration of planning practice, policy and theory has clearly shifted substantially over subsequent decades. Throughout, however, the countries of Europe have continued to be central in this history. Behind this continuing role, however, lies an important question: how meaningful is it to speak of a *European* planning tradition? Or has it actually been a concentration within the continent of different national traditions that have interacted and cross-fertilized but ultimately remained distinct and separate? Further, has the position changed over time, with the notion of a European as opposed to the different national traditions growing more (or less) salient over time?

The first problem when addressing these questions is that it is unclear what we mean by 'Europe' in either a physical or cultural sense (particularly the latter). Even the physical dividing line between Europe and Asia within the vast Eurasian landmass is a rather arbitrary one, cutting through several individual countries. The continent's limits are far less definite than those of Africa, Australia or the Americas. Much has been made of the richness of Europe's cultural heritage, rooted in the classical Greco-Roman and the Judæo-Christian traditions and the movements that subsequently flowed from them. Yet no one could claim that what has sprung up from these roots has been a homogeneous or monolithic strand of cultural expression. Nor do these traditions even cover the entirety of European cultural experience with, for example, Islamism having deep European roots and contributing much to its cultural and intellectual prowess. Paradoxically, it seems that diversity is itself a defining characteristic of Europe's cultural heritage. There is also a wider problem because the construction of Europe as a cultural

phenomenon has been a major part of Western culture. By definition, this Western-/European-ness has become global rather than continental in its spatial extent. In short, therefore, there is no simple, broad definition of 'Europe' that can be invoked.

Transport and Communications Improvements and European Convergence

It is more useful to address our central problem from the other direction, by examining specific aspects of planning's modern history in Europe. Doing this, it becomes immediately clear that the extent of planning's commonality within Europe has reflected the contradictory effects of both powerful convergent *and* divergent forces. Chief amongst the convergent forces when modern planning emerged and was elaborated in Europe were the major improvements occurring in the continent's transport and communications. Like planning itself, such improvements were not uniquely European, but their initial appearance and network density came earlier, and was greater within Europe than in any other comparable multinational region in the world. Most notable among early improvements was the creation of extensive railway systems (Caruana-Galizia and Martí-Henneberg 2013) but, at much the same time, there were equivalent developments in regular and reliable international shipping services. Similarly, it was around the same date that the process of printing also became highly mechanized. Additionally, mass postal and electric telegraph systems were also appearing.

All these drew the countries of Europe together during the later nineteenth century as never before. Having easier means of contact facilitated full and rapid exchange of the new planning knowledge across the continent (Ward 2002). Early planning literature was produced, disseminated and, in many cases, translated into other languages. Personal contacts were made and consolidated; extensive knowledge and skill networks were developed. Visits by individuals and groups to inspect key sites of early planning interest occurred and conference delegates and exhibition visitors could exchange ideas and practices with others from elsewhere. The overall effect was that planning ideas and practices which had originated in one European country soon became known elsewhere in the continent (and elsewhere, though usually more slowly). This fairly rapid circulation of knowledge was helped hugely by a remarkable removal of barriers to the international movement of people, literature and capital (Torpey 2000). In 1861, the French government abandoned the need for passports to enter the country, starting a wider trend. By 1913, it was possible for a British citizen to travel to most parts of the world without needing a passport. (Yet the exceptions, the Ottoman and Russian Empires, were partially European ones.)

This freedom of movement went on the outbreak of war in 1914, never to return in quite such a free form. However, the effects of institutional constraints were partly counteracted because the physical possibilities for international travel and communication continued to expand. By the 1930s, a few planners were travelling by air within Europe, an experience that became more common after 1945. Air was also beginning to be used to carry international postal communications from the 1930s. International telephone use in Europe grew from the 1950s though was little used for international planning-related communication until much later. The most recent change to communications networks arose when the electronic computer which had developed gradually from the 1940s was combined with telecommunications. This enabled the emergence of electronic mail and the internet which became widely available in the more affluent countries during the 1990s.

No longer, however, were the linking effects of these new modes as disproportionately great in their effects on Europe compared to other parts of the world. Certainly, they linked European countries very efficiently with each other but, importantly, they also connected them even more

effectively than previously possible with others in other continents. Thus, European links with the USA improved hugely after reliable jet air travel appeared in the later 1950s, with palpable effects for the transatlantic circulation of planning information and expertise. The USA became the major alternative source of knowledge for European planners beyond their own continent, especially those with a sufficient understanding of the English language.

Nationalism as a Divisive Force within Europe

If growing possibilities of intercontinental communication could bring a relative decline in the importance of some links within Europe, other forces were more directly divergent. Despite planning ideas and practices having many transnational features, they were realized and converted into actual policies and actions within the narrower institutional boxes that were individual nation states. Symptomatic of the manifold national 'brands' of planning was the proliferation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries of each European language's neologism for the new activity. It was at this time that the terms städtebau, stadt-planung, town planning, urbanisme, stedebouw, stadsplanering, urbanistica, urbanismo and others first appeared. Linguistic familial affinities were clearly apparent which also suggested at least some underlying national relationships of planning thought and practice within Europe (Hein 2018).

It was no chance coincidence that planning emerged and largely developed during what is usually regarded as 'the age of nationalism'. During the nineteenth and for much of the twentieth centuries, the nation state came to be widely regarded as the ideal institutional basis of effective, progressive and enlightened governance. It was a pattern that had emerged first in Western and parts of Central Europe, with nations such as Britain, France and Germany perceived as models of advanced governance based on national self-determination. By the later nineteenth century, becoming a forward-looking independent nation state was seen as an essential foundation to be properly 'European', especially so for subordinated peoples living in the Austro-Hungarian, Russian and Ottoman Empires.

The new ideas and practices of planning were a significant element of this idealization of the progressive nation state, testament to its capacity for wise and careful governance. Planning became part of national political, usually reformist, discourses, to be embedded in national laws and articulated in detailed urban policies. The mainstream of planning within most European countries in the early decades of the twentieth century largely reflected the ideals of liberal nationalism. Under such regimes, political legitimacy was secured via elective parliamentary democracies that were at least moving toward universal adult voting rights. Similar principles, often more advanced than those at the national level, were also to be applied in the governance of cities, with well-administered local governments and policies for their development. Like nationalism itself, however, planning soon proved capable of serving more conservative, author-itarian and altogether less-enlightened ends.

Nationalism in all its forms, even at its most liberal, was also capable of competitive rivalries and even lethal conflicts with competing nationalisms or transnational imperialisms. The signs were already evident in the continental wars of the later nineteenth century but became quite unmistakable in the two world wars of the twentieth. The emergence of new European nation states after 1919 marked the high point of belief in liberal nationalism as a progressive force. Significantly, planning was a way first to assert (before 1914) and then express (after 1918) these new national identities. During these years such tendencies were clearly apparent in planning for cities such as Helsinki, Krakow, Tallinn, Prague and Ankara (e.g., Purchla 1999; Kacar 2010; Hallas–Murula 2017) as they embraced these new discourses and principles of urban planning.

The hopes and aspirations of the new nation states can be glimpsed in the plans of this period for these cities.

Overseas Imperialism and European Planning

Yet nationalism was not inherently an enemy of empires. While multiple new nation states appeared from the ashes of the former continental empires, extensive empires outside the continent remained a marked feature of the more outward-facing nation states of west central Europe. At various times, these nations had sought economic opportunities and strategic power in overseas imperial territories on other continents. By the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the possession of colonies had come to be seen as a desirable attribute of a successful nation state. It became a new area of rivalry (and occasionally, conflict) between Europe's nation states.

Partly because of this, overseas imperialism came to have an important place in the history of European planning. This occurred in several distinct ways. Most obviously the new ideas and practices of modern planning could be deployed in colonial contexts to facilitate economic exploitation and effective administration. Depending on how skillfully it was used, modern planning's image as a progressive and reformist policy could be deployed to lend these qualities to imperialism itself. It was a new way to appear to take 'civilization' to 'backward lands' (or, in less charitable words, to white the sepulcher of the exploitative and repressive project that imperialism actually was). How successfully the different European countries did this in their imperial possessions became an important symbol of advanced imperial practice, another source of status rivalry amongst European countries.

Major projects such as the British creating the new planned Indian imperial capital of New Delhi or France's pioneering of planning in its new protectorate of Morocco (both begun shortly before 1914) set new standards for this 'enlightened' version of imperialism (e.g., Wright 1991; Home 2013). More directly relevant to planning within Europe was that imperial planning was a valuable test-bed on which the possibilities of planning could be rehearsed in less politically contested settings where planners could have a freer hand than in the cities at the hearts of empires. Many leading planners in various European states up to at least the 1960s had 'cut their teeth' in their country's colonial possessions.

Imperialism thus played an important part in Europe's planning history, one common to many, though certainly not all, of its nations. It engendered links between nation states and their empires outside Europe, rather than with their European neighbors. On some occasions, imperial rivalries became a further source of tension and even conflict between them. And, by providing colonial canvases on which each imperial power could elaborate their planning approach more freely than was possible in their European homeland, it also helped foster larger differences between the planning approaches of different European countries. As such imperialism became another divergent force, differentiating rather than bringing together the planning approaches of the nations of Europe.

Wars and Planning in Europe

The wars through which aspiring and ambitious national states sought recognition, identity and greater European power or territory while opposing nations or empires sought to frustrate them also damaged the sense of a common European approach to urban planning. Territories that were conquered became subject to the brand of planning favored by the victors rather than an approach determined collaboratively with the vanquished. Yet this is not to say that combatant

nations did not sometimes try to learn about, even emulate, the planning of their enemies. This was the case in the Second World War, when both German and British planners, for example, went to some lengths to find out what those on the other side were doing in order to inform and potentially improve their own approach. Neutral capitals, notably Stockholm, were places where plans and planning literature published by the other side could be acquired. Refugee planners from the Nazi regime became a useful source of planning intelligence on Germany for the British and Americans.

But these were not the major impacts of any war. Its circumstances overwhelmingly threw enemies apart and drew allies together. Knowledge about planning (and much else) circulated far more effectively between allies than with the enemy. Since these allies were not in the two world wars of the twentieth century exclusively European, then the impact of wars was doubly weakening of the sense of a European approach. Not only were they profoundly disruptive to any sense of the cohesiveness of Europe, but combatant nations strengthened their links to their allies outside the continent. At least some of these connections became more salient than some of those within it.

Although widespread active war in Europe ceased after 1945, a new hostility, the Cold War, soon followed, splitting the continent into two heavily armed camps. Lasting until the early 1990s, it never involved active conflict but allowed important differences to grow between urban planning on each side of the 'Iron Curtain' that separated them. A few countries, particularly Yugoslavia and Finland, stood (in different ways) partly between the two sides. Otherwise, this new West-East split was another major schism within the continent.

From the mid-1950s, however, after Stalin's death, there were genuine attempts to make connections between planners on each side. Before then, differences had been most striking, with the monumental, neo-classical approach of Soviet bloc socialist realist planning contrasting sharply with western approaches broadly derived from modernist principles and the garden city tradition (Åman 1992). Such differences did not disappear after Stalin but similar industrialized building technologies were used in the housing programs on both sides (Smith 2010). Western experience in planning new satellite towns was also admired and drawn on in the Soviet bloc (Cook, Ward and Ward 2014). The end of the Cold War in the early 1990s saw a greater shift of western approaches but some previous distinctions persisted, especially in the former Soviet Union itself. Nor has planning been immune to the consequences of the serious nationalist rivalries which have (re-)appeared in parts of former communist Europe.

Cohesive Aspects within European Planning

Despite these many sources of divergence and national differences within European planning, they held some possibilities for continental cohesion. For all their divisive effects, wars and especially reconstruction were common European experiences, giving ample opportunities for planners and reformers in different countries to reach out to each other and share their experiences. From an early stage, there were also more conscious efforts to bring together planners of different nationalities. Thus a formal international planning network organization, the International Garden Cities and Town Planning Association, the precursor of the present International Federation of Housing and Planning (and undergoing several name changes over time) was formed in 1913 (Geertse 2012; Allan 2013). Other international organizations for roads (1909) and local government (1913), which were highly relevant to planning, were established at much the same time and an international body promoting modernist architecture and planning appeared in 1928. Despite their wider geographical aspirations, all were Europe-centered during their first decades.

As might be anticipated, the effectiveness of these organizations declined markedly in both world wars but they certainly brought planners and related professions together mainly across Europe during the interwar years and after 1945. Sometimes, certainly, their gatherings highlighted international differences. One was the prolonged British attachment to the garden city in contrast to the stronger continental interest in more varied forms of collective housing. A more serious division arose when the International Federation of Housing and Town Planning (as it was then called) came under German control after 1938 and was actively used to foster the wartime Nazi vision of a 'New Order' for Europe. An alternative free Federation was started in Britain as a rallying point for planners in the occupied countries. Yet, aside from such divergences, these organizations generally encouraged more cohesive approaches for the continent rather than being narrowly nationalistic or sectional.

Over time, the history of planning and related areas of public policy in Europe's nations also showed broad similarities. These were more intangible or, if tangible, less about the detail or specific form than more general characteristics. Even if planning ideas and practices were consciously borrowed, the results have almost never involved exact cloning. Thus, although the garden city concept (to take an apparently ubiquitous example) touched all parts of Europe, its national and local realizations varied greatly, even in neighboring countries. Rather than there being such specific forms or models of planning across Europe, there were similar conceptions of planning as an integral part of urban governance, supported to varying degrees by public investment in urban development. These conceptions became deeply embedded and widely implemented across the continent during the post-1945 years. Whether in the capitalist social democracies (and the capitalist dictatorships) of Western Europe or the communist people's democracies of the Soviet bloc or the 'in-between' states this broad approach took root, seemingly to a greater extent than in any other continent.

The European Project and Planning

In Western Europe, this broad position became the point of departure for the supranational project of Europe which took shape after 1945. Initially having little relevance for urban planning, its concerns gradually acquired spatial and urban dimensions. From 1972, the European Economic Commission initiated its own environmental policies and from 1975, policies for regional development. Yet an overtly urban dimension did not appear until after 1989. This urban focus grew as the Commission expanded to include more countries and in 1993 showed its full ambition of supranational, Europe-wide governance, becoming the European Union. Considerable national diversity of planning approaches persisted, however. Important studies of the 1990s/early 2000s identified four ideal-type models of national approach in EU countries – the 'comprehensive integrated model', the 'land use management model', the 'regional economic planning model' and the 'urbanism model' (CEC 1997; Dühr, Colomb and Nadin 2010). Individual countries typically showed a unique mix of these ideal types, though usually favoring one (or sometimes two).

In 1994, the important URBAN program was launched. This saw the creation of mutual-learning networks in urban areas around the EU tackling common aspects of urban social and community development. From 2002, the URBACT programs subsequently continued and expanded this approach, focusing on facets of urban regeneration. Although these programs have remained primarily concerned with urban social and economic policies, they have certainly impinged on urban planning, broadly defined. Yet, despite their emphasis on Europe-wide cross-national learning, these programs have encouraged only limited policy convergence (Carpenter *et al.* 2020).

Additionally, there were several transnational cross-border regional initiatives to coordinate spatial development. In the 1990s, the EU came closest (to date) to direct involvement in actual urban and regional planning, hitherto a competency left at national and sub-national levels. The ambition was apparent in the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP), prepared from 1993 to 1999 (Williams 1999). This promoted balanced and sustainable development across EU territory. Its broad aims were economic and social cohesion; conservation and management of natural resources and cultural heritage; and more spatially balanced competitiveness. Behind it lay hopes of a full EU spatial planning competency to harness and coordinate individual EU sectoral policies in their spatial expression. This never materialized, however, so the ESDP remained only a 'perspective'. It was implemented (or supposed to be) through sectoral policies and via national and subnational policies. In other words, it remained advisory and persuasive.

Ultimately then the EU has not so far challenged national responsibilities for urban and spatial planning in other than indirect ways. Even so, it has been a convergent force in harmonizing thinking and discourse about urban planning across the continent. In a relatively short period, it has affected the ways that urban and spatial problems are understood and policies framed and implemented in Europe, even beyond EU boundaries. As never before, it has also routinized the notion of mutuality and drawing on wider Europe-wide experience in urban policies and planning. In URBAN/URBACT programs, for example, urban policy professionals and decision makers have regularly engaged with their peers in other European countries.

Recently there have been serious challenges to the EU, reflecting issues such as immigration and refugees, a rise of nationalist political sentiments and the secession of the United Kingdom from the EU. Yet, despite these things and the continued absence of a formal Europe-level planning competency, the EU continues to be the main recent factor encouraging a distinctly *European* notion of planning.

Conclusions

Since the second half of the nineteenth century, as modern urban planning was starting to take shape, to today, contradictory forces of convergence and divergence have been operating in the continent. For many years, Europe was a diverse collection of distinct nationalities – and, to a substantial extent, it still is. Immense improvements in the transport and communications infrastructures drew the continent together to a greater extent than any other multi-national world region. It was, however, individual nationalities and nation states that, especially after 1919, were the usual institutions for governance within the continent. Certainly, the nation states soon shared wider assumptions about the extent to which and the way they should be shaping their cities and regions. Yet they framed and implemented these intentions in distinctly national ways. They referred to and learned from each other and also showed certain cultural affinities and path dependencies in the kind of planning they adopted – the Latin, Germanic, Nordic, etc. Within the wider European movement promoting planning, there was also no shortage of individuals with internationalist outlooks and aspirations. But, at the same time, the continent has remained prone to nationalistic and other rivalries, frictions and conflicts, especially so in the first half of the twentieth century.

How then should we answer the questions posed at the outset? Doubtless other commentators could weigh the evidence differently. To this one, however, it seems that Europe still presents a diversity of primarily national planning traditions. Many efforts have been made to learn of and from the experience of others. But only in recent decades, inspired by the EU work concerning urban and spatial development policies, has there been anything approaching a common European planning tradition. Yet unless the EU assumes a full spatial planning competency

(which at present seems highly unlikely) then Europe will primarily remain a series of national planning traditions. As in so many other respects, the planning interest of Europe lies in the sheer variety it presents within a relatively concentrated world region.

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