

***Variegated Europeanization and urban policy: Dynamics of policy transfer in France, Italy, Spain and the UK***

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### **Introduction**

Cities lie at the heart of global concerns around economic, social and environmental issues in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, both nationally and internationally (UN-Habitat, 2014; OCDE, 2017). Urban policy is a key tool to address these challenges, as a government-led process that promotes a coordinated approach to urban development. Increasingly over the last 30 years, urban policy has been implemented through a multi-scalar approach, through collaboration both vertically between different tiers of government, and horizontally between various policy sectors within government.

A key driver of the multilevel governance approach to urban policy has been the European Union (EU), through its Cohesion Policy aimed at urban and regional development (CoR, 2009; Van der Brande, 2014). Since the 1990s, EU programmes have promoted a specific “European model of urban development” (EC, 2011: 5), which embeds a number of key principles including a holistic, integrated, strategic and area-based approach, involving multi-level governance structures that promote societal agents’ participation, and set within an overall strategy for the city’s development. All these principles are part of the so-called Integrated Sustainable Urban Development (ISUD) approach of the EU. However, each one of the member states within the EU has its own histories, governance structures and policy cultures, which bring distinctive approaches to urban policy, while being set within an overall framework of neoliberalisation as the dominant form of political economic organization (Chorianopoulos and Iosifides, 2006). Therefore, this raises questions about the role and impact of the EU in urban policy at the national level, and to what extent domestic urban policies within this context are converging due to processes of ‘Europeanization’ (Radaelli, 2003; Olsen, 2002).

Studies of Europeanization have grown in recent years, as member states become ever more woven into the EU polity over time. In the context of urban policies, Hamedinger and Wolffhardt (2010: 28) define Europeanization as “the interplay between actors and institutions on the European and the city level, which leads to changes in local politics, policies, institutions, arrangements, discourse, actors’ preferences, values, norms and belief systems on both levels”. Similarly, academic attention is also growing on EU urban policy, in particular due to the rise of the policy initiative ‘Urban Agenda for the EU’ (De Gregorio Hurtado, 2017a; Dossi, 2017; Verhelst, 2017; EU Minsters, 2016). Against this backdrop, this article aims to explore the interaction between these two domains to understand how and to what extent EU urban policy is shaping, and is shaped by, domestic urban policy in a neoliberal context, through an examination of four member states within a comparative framework (Pickvance, 2001; 2005): France, Italy, Spain and the UK. In other words, how far is the EU shaping domestic urban policy, or vice versa (the ‘direction’ of transfer); what aspects of the European urban model are being transferred through Europeanization in different contexts (the ‘object’ of transfer), and what does this suggest about the future role of the European Union in shaping urban policy in the future (the ‘impact’ of the transfer)?

This article addresses these issues, providing insights into the contradictions between processes of convergence through Europeanization, and path-dependent systems and trajectories which forge alternative paths. In doing so, it advances wider debates on the impact of Europeanization in a neo-liberal context, by arguing that member states more likely to be affected by Europeanization are

those most impacted by national austerity measures. In these countries, the EU approach is more readily adopted, by shifting national norms and adapting domestic policy goals to fit European principles, in order to qualify for EU funding. In a context of austerity urbanism, this has important implications for understanding the potential impact of the EU approach on national urban policies throughout Europe, in particular in the member states of Eastern Europe that joined the EU later, and with less of a tradition of a domestic urban policy. The issue is also pertinent in the context of negotiations for the post-2020 period of Cohesion Policy, in which the budget and visibility of urban issues will be reinforced (Europa website, n.d.), and during which time, issues of domestic budgetary pressures will further impact on stretched municipal finances. This article therefore contributes to theoretical debates around the notion of urban Europeanization and its variegated forms in different contexts.

The paper is divided into five sections. It first explores the literature on Europeanization and national urban policy in a neoliberal context. The following sections set out the analytical framework for assessing urban Europeanization in a comparative perspective, and details the methods used for the study. The paper then analyses the four member states under study, outlining their urban policies and the dynamics of Europeanization from the 1990s until the current Cohesion Policy 2014-2020, using the comparative framework to structure the member state analysis. The paper concludes by considering how these findings contribute to current debates on the Europeanization of cities and urban policy, and the potential policy implications.

### **“Variegated Europeanization”**

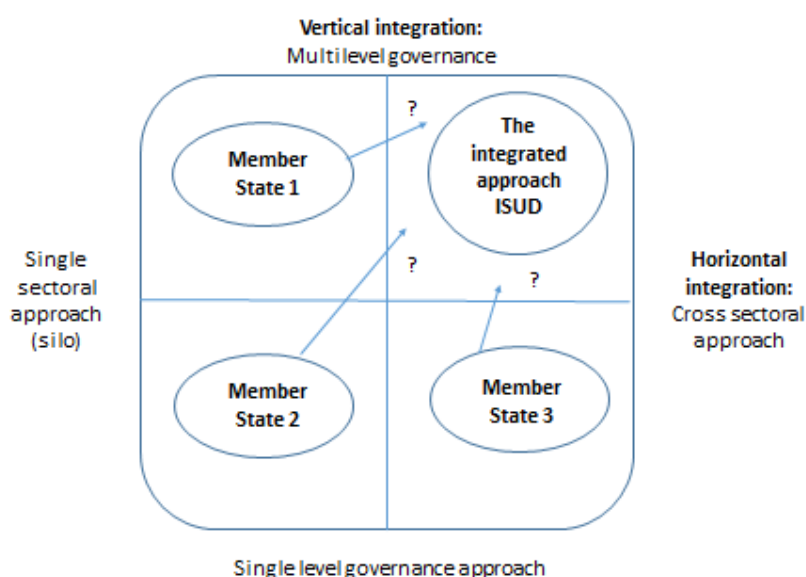
There is no single definition of Europeanization (Olsen 2002), but the most widespread interpretation is so-called ‘download’ Europeanization, namely “processes of construction, diffusion and institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, ‘ways of doing things’ and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the making of EU public policy and politics and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, identities, political structures and public policies” (Radaelli, 2003: 30).

For others, Europeanization is a two-way process, not only of ‘downloading’ but also ‘uploading’. John (2001) defines Europeanization as “a process whereby European ideas and practices transfer to the core of local decision-making as well as from local policy-making arenas to the supranational level” (2001:73). He also highlights a third dynamic related to the role of trans-national co-operation or networks called ‘horizontal’ or ‘circular’ Europeanization. This approach has been explored by Verhelst (2017) and Payre (2010), who have both analysed the role of Eurocities, a network of European cities set up to facilitate cross-city working and lobby the EU on urban matters. Other recent studies have also explored urban Europeanization at the EU level (Dossi, 2017; González-Medina, 2013), in Spain and Italy (González-Medina and Fedeli, 2015), the Netherlands (Dukes and van der Wusten, 2014) and Luxemburg (Becker, 2010).

However, what makes the study of Europeanization of urban policy interesting is its relation to contemporary debates in urban studies, in particular to multi-level governance (Hamedinger et al, 2006) and neoliberal urbanism (Peck et al, 2009). Through the EU’s implantation of urban and regional policy, it has opened up new possibilities for engaging with urban governance systems, and expanded the opportunities for city-regional governance structures in a multi-scalar framework. Studies of Europeanization are important as they can shed light on the impact of these openings on

domestic governance and policy systems and can explore the extent to which the EU’s vision of an urban model is leading member states with different urban policy traditions towards a converging approach to urban development (Figure 1). That vision is encapsulated by the concept of ‘integrated sustainable urban development’ (ISUD), first introduced by EU Ministers in 2007, and embedded into EU policies related to urban development (De Gregorio Hurtado, 2012; González-Medina, 2013; González-Medina and Fedeli, 2015; EUKN, 2016). The convergence thesis would suggest that through the dynamics of Europeanization, member states would move towards an ISUD approach.

Figure 1 –Model of convergence on ISUD principles in urban policy through Europeanization



There is a tension however, between the tendency to converge through processes of Europeanization, and the embedded path dependent trajectory in each member state. The varied conditions and settings across the EU are a reflection of the different political cultures in each context, that are deeply rooted in each country’s history and which in turn determine its development path. Here it is useful to draw on the variegated neoliberalism literature (Brenner et al, 2010), which emphasizes the systemically uneven or ‘variegated’ character of the neoliberal political economy. Europeanization is operating in a hybrid neoliberal scenario where urban policy interacts with inherited institutional and spatial landscapes (Peck et al., 2009). In the context of urban policy statecraft, we suggest that a process of ‘variegated Europeanization’ is at work, with different facets playing out in different contexts, and that the tendency towards urban policy convergence through Europeanization is refracted by path dependent trajectories. In order to explore this further, we have developed an analytical framework to understand the processes of transfer and diffusion between the EU and national levels, which is presented in the following section.

## Assessing Europeanization: An analytical framework for comparison

This research addresses Europeanization in the domain of urban policy applying a comparative approach. This analytical approach is characterised by two features (Pickvance, 2005: 1-2): firstly, an interest in the explanatory question of why the observed similarities and differences between cases exist; and secondly, the reliance on the collection of data from two or more cases, according to a common framework. According to this approach, we present both the comparative research design in which our case studies are framed (the ‘most different system design’) and the analytical framework used to conduct the comparative analysis in a systematic manner (using the three categories of ‘direction’, ‘object’ and ‘impact’ of Europeanization).

With regard to the classification of the case studies, we draw on Przeworski and Teune’s (1970) ‘most different systems’ research design, comparing two different groups of member states (with and without a tradition of a national urban policy<sup>1</sup>) to explore the common elements they share of the EU urban development model. According to D’Albergo (2010), two of these countries have an explicit national urban policy with a spatial focus at the city level (France and the UK), while the other two countries (Spain and Italy) are lacking such a nationally-led policy approach (Figure 2). This selection of cases provides an opportunity to explore the dynamics of urban Europeanization in member states with different levels of maturity of their national urban policy.

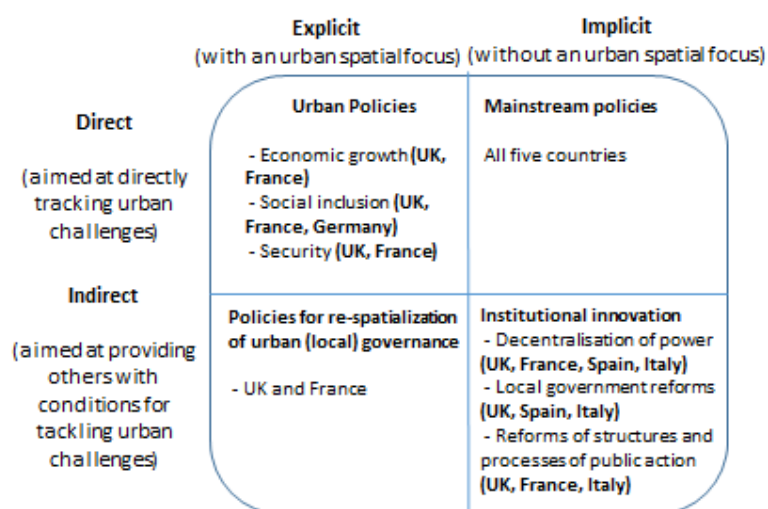
Nevertheless, despite their differences, in all four cases common elements arise in line with the so-called EU urban development model (ISUD). Our hypothesis is that this is the result of their level of participation and/or exposure to urban Europeanization dynamics since they are all long-standing members of the EU and have been steeped in the principles of the EU’s Cohesion Policy for at least 30 years. In line with this, we expect that the impact of this process will be conditioned by the ‘misfit’ between EU urban policy and domestic urban policies (Jordan & Liefferink, 2003), but also by their own path dependence trajectories in this policy domain, their political priorities at national level, and their situation in relation to austerity measures.

In order to explore this, we have built an analytical framework based on three dimensions drawn from the literature on Europeanization: a) direction of transfer; b) object of transfer and c) impact of transfer. Firstly, in relation to *direction*, the dynamics of Europeanization can take many forms, namely ‘down-load’, ‘up-load’ as well as ‘circular’ or ‘horizontal’ Europeanization (Marshall, 2005; Kern, 2007), depending on the direction of the transfer between the EU and member states. Secondly, John (2000) has set out a ‘ladder of Europeanization’, detailing the different levels of transfer, starting with simply transferring information, through to securing EU funding, and ultimately to adopting EU principles such as building partnerships into local governance structures. This dimension determines the *object* of the transfer (Hall, 1993; Jordan and Liefferink, 2003). Thirdly, several authors (Börzel and Risse, 2000; Jordan and Liefferink, 2003; Zerbinati, 2004) suggest that the varying degrees of influence depend on the ‘misfit’ between the EU and member states. This refers to the *impacts* of the transfer. These are further elaborated in the following tables.

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<sup>1</sup> Here we focus on urban policy, defined as “a coherent set of decisions derived through a deliberate government-led process of coordinating and rallying various actors for a common vision and goal that will promote more transformative, productive, inclusive and resilient urban development for the long term” (UN-Habitat, 2014: 2). Thus, in our research we understand urban policy to be a subset of spatial planning policy. In this sense, the focus of our study is wider, as we recognize that the existence of a long tradition of spatial planning at the national level, for example in Spain or Italy, does not guarantee the existence of a national urban policy.

Figure 2 – Typology of national urban policies



Source: adapted from D’Albergo (2010: 140).

1) ‘Direction of transfer’: Policies and practices may be *down-loaded* or *up-loaded*, variously over time, and concurrently, be subject to *horizontal* or circular transfers of experience and knowledge between cities, without the EU acting as conduit (Table 1). Horizontal Europeanization can take place between cities bi-laterally, or increasingly through membership of urban networking bodies.

Table 1: Direction of transfer

	Sub-dimensions	Definition
<b>Direction of transfer</b>	Down-load (top-down)	Changes in policies, practices, preferences or the actors of domestic governance systems, because of the negotiation or implementation of EU programmes.
	Up-load (bottom-up)	Transfer of innovative urban practices to the supranational level, which have led to the incorporation of locally developed initiatives into EU policies or programmes.
	Horizontal (circular)	Exchange of know-how and experience between cities, without the direct involvement of the EU institutions, but which act as "facilitators" for the integration of EU principles at the local level.

Source: Own elaboration, based on Marshall (2005) and Kern (2007)

2) 'Object of transfer': Policy content, structure and style can be transferred through the process of Europeanization (Table 2). Following Hall (1993), *'policy content'* can be divided into goals, instruments and regulations or standards. The second dimension, *'policy structure'*, can be divided into two aspects: *national institutional frameworks* that make up the building blocks of the state (such as departments and agencies), and *policy coordination networks* that include codes, guidelines and ways of working between agencies (Jordan and Liefferink, 2003). The third dimension is *'policy style'*, that is, the norms and values associated with administrative work (Bulmer and Burch, 2000).

Table 2: Object of transfer

	Sub-dimensions	Definition
<b>Object of transfer</b>	Policy content	<p><b>i. Policy goals:</b> Transfer of a policy paradigm.</p> <p><b>ii. Policy instruments:</b> Transfer of policy techniques through which policy goals are reached.</p> <p><b>iii. Policy regulations and standards:</b> Transfer of regulations or standards to achieve policy goals.</p>
	Policy structure	<p><b>i. Institutional framework</b>, including departments, agencies, etc.).</p> <p><b>ii. Policy coordination networks</b>, including codes, guidelines and ways of working.</p>
	Policy style	<b>Norms and values associated with administrative work</b>

Source: Own elaboration, adapted from Jordan and Liefferink (2003) and Hall (1993)

3) 'Impact of transfer': according to Börzel and Risse (2000), the impact of interaction with EU policies and processes can be: 'absorption', 'accommodation' or 'transformation' (Table 3). The impact is in part a function of the initial policy 'misfit' between the EU and domestic approaches, although the presence of a 'misfit' is only a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for Europeanization to take place (Jordan and Liefferink, 2003).

Table 3 – Impacts of transfer

	Extent of policy 'misfit'	Degree of domestic change
<b>Absorption</b>	<b>Small:</b> EU and national policy similar	<b>Small:</b> States are able to incorporate /domesticate EU approaches without substantially modifying national policies
<b>Accommodation</b>	<b>Medium:</b> EU and national policy differ	<b>Medium:</b> States accommodate /mediate EU approaches by adapting existing policy while leaving its core features intact
<b>Transformation</b>	<b>High:</b> EU and national policy markedly different	<b>High:</b> Domestication fails; states forced to replace or substantially alter existing policy to satisfy EU approaches

Source: Jordan and Liefferink (2003), from Börzel and Risse (2000)

We have applied this analytical framework to the research taking what Ragin (2014) refers to as a 'case-oriented strategy' of comparative analysis, and what Pickvance (2001: 12) calls a 'holistic

strategy', which means that a small number of empirical cases should be addressed holistically in order to understand the causal processes leading to observed similarities and differences. Here the holistic analysis involves a detailed examination of the three dimensions of Europeanization outlined above.

## **Methodology**

This research employed qualitative research methods (document analysis and in-depth interviews) to collect data for each case study (Yin, 1989). Firstly, a review of key policy documents was undertaken for each member state. The documents were sourced through national government websites, databases that focus on 'grey literature' such as Open SIGLE (System for Information on Grey Literature in Europe) and other indexed databases (see Annex I for a list of the policy documents reviewed). Documents were selected according to their relevance for urban policy, the author source (a national perspective, rather than regional or local), and the date of publication (from the 1990s to the present day). Literature was analysed using a "policy-tracing" technique, mapping out key shifts in approach, to explore the trajectory of national policy over time.

Secondly, the policy-tracing analysis was complemented by a total of eighteen in-depth interviews with leading urban policy actors in each member state, to triangulate their views on the mapping of their member state's urban policy. The three dimensions of Europeanization outlined above were taken into account in the design of the questionnaire.

The interviews were conducted during spring 2017 with three groups of informants: politicians, civil servants and experts: seven in Spain, three in Italy, four in France and four in the UK. The national level was selected rather than a lower spatial scale, given that the research focuses on the influence of the EU on national policy agendas. Informants were selected according to their high-level expertise at the national level and through a 'snowball technique' (Morgan, 2008). Despite potential bias given the focused number of interviewees, its value lies in accessing key informants who could illuminate the processes at work and provide insightful observations, rather than aiming to generalize from a wider sample of respondents without necessarily having the appropriate in-depth knowledge.

The interviews were semi-structured, lasting up to two hours, and carried out either face-to-face or by telephone/skype, with the data recorded and transcribed. All interviewees were asked to give informed consent and were made aware of the use of the information they provided for this study. Interviews followed a common format, with the possibility to explore nationally-specific issues. The information provided in interview, together with the analysis of the policy documents, has been assessed according to the three analytical categories of *direction*, *object* and *impact* of transfer of urban Europeanization related to the selected cases. The aim was to operationalize the three dimensions through an analysis of evidence in the discourse related to core notions in each category, as illustrated in Annex II.

A summary of the analysis for each country is reported below, adopting a temporal approach and discursive format to allow for the mobilization of the three analytical dimensions in each case, in an interrelated or holistic manner. Each case study begins with a short summary of the history of urban



policy in the member state, and then relates this to the debates on Europeanization, structured around the three categories of direction, object and impact, to allow for comparison between the cases in the final section. A summary of all four cases is provided in Table 4.

## Tracing urban Europeanization in four member states

### France

Dating back to the 1980s, *La Politique de la Ville* (“Policy for Cities”) in France has aimed to address the challenges of disadvantaged neighbourhoods, particularly in the suburbs, *la banlieue* (Busquet et al, 2016). In the 1980s and 1990s, the focus was on a combination of social and physical (re)development, but following the 2003 Borloo Act, policy shifted to outright demolition and rebuilding of the housing stock, with a greater variety of tenure introducing a policy of “mixed income neighbourhoods”.

In 2014, the *Politique de la Ville* was revised, introducing multi-partner Urban Contracts (*Contrats de Ville*) between metropolitan areas and the State, including a range of different public and civil society partners. Together they design integrated strategies (social, economic and physical interventions) at the level of the agglomeration to address the challenges of deprived neighbourhoods and their residents, with the aim of reducing spatial inequalities within the wider urban area.

Although France has traditionally been a very centralised state, more recently cities are playing a greater role in the institutional framework, in particular following the MAPAM Act of 2014 (*Modernisation de l'action publique territoriale et d'affirmation des métropoles*). This created the status of metropole for France’s three largest cities (Paris, Lyon and Marseille) including increased powers, competencies and budgets that correspond to a decentralization of urban policy. France therefore has a well-defined national urban policy, although recent steps to delegate powers to the three largest cities have shifted some decision-making down to the metropolitan level.

In relation to **direction**, the *Politique de la Ville* in France was heavily influential in shaping the URBAN Community Initiative (‘upload Europeanization’) and has continued to act as a policy shaper for the EU’s urban policy. In the words of one commentator: “*URBAN was completely inspired by France’s urban policy ... historically, France has a strong presence, France has a strong influence*”. France’s role in drawing up the *Marseille Declaration* in 2008 was also highlighted by a number of respondents as being influential, through which a number of principles and objectives related to urban policy that were important in the French context, were crystallised into the EU Declaration (EU Ministers, 2008).

However, respondents also recognised France’s role as a policy-taker rather than a policy-shaper (Brunazzo, 2010), particularly in relation to urban environmental issues (‘download Europeanization’). This policy area had not been a priority for the French government in relation to the *Politique de la Ville*, but respondents noted that following the EU’s lead, issues related to climate change and energy transition are now more present in the *Contrat de Ville*. As one policy-maker articulated: “*The movement [of urban policy] is in both directions ... France had to think of urban policy reciprocity in the way it designs and the way it approaches urban policy.*”

In terms of 'horizontal Europeanization', France is a key figure in the URBACT III network, both administratively being the head of the URBACT office, as well as having a strong involvement of French cities in the network, which has promoted a horizontal exchange between member cities. The head of the Urban Innovative Actions, another EU urban initiative, is also located in France.

France was influential in the 1990s in transferring **content**, helping to shape the URBAN Community Initiative. But there have also been elements of 'download' Europeanization of content, through the integration of environmental issues into the *Contrat de Ville*, which were not initially a priority within French national urban policy. The influence of the EU has also extended to transferring the *structure* and *style* of approaches to urban policy from the EU to France, with a transfer of working processes that include a greater emphasis on the involvement of civil society, participation and community engagement into the working methods of French urban policy. For one policy maker: "Although we speak about the involvement of civil society quite a lot, in reality approaches that involve civil society are not in the culture of French administration. Europe and URBACT have that approach in their genes, globally, but that approach doesn't come from France, it comes from other countries, cultures". Similarly, respondents felt that the importance that the EU attaches to policy evaluation has also influenced French approaches to project and programme management, with greater emphasis on evaluation of policy outputs and outcomes within French national urban policy, partly because of the EU's influence.

Given the close fit between French national urban policy and the EU's approach, the **impact** of Europeanization can be classified as 'absorption', rather than 'accommodation' or 'transformation'. Respondents noted that there have been changes to the management of urban policy, that align more closely with the EU's emphasis on an integrated multi-level governance approach. For example, in 2014 a new national public body was created to support the government in developing the *Politique de la Ville*, the General Commission for Territorial Equality (*Commissariat générale à l'égalité des territoires* - CGET). Within government, there is also a specific governance mechanism for urban policy, an Interministerial Council which meets twice a year, and takes a multi-sectoral approach, bringing together all the Ministers with portfolios relating to urban issues, such as employment, education, health, security and housing. Furthermore, to facilitate the implementation of the urban dimension of Cohesion Policy, a national network has been established, the Urban Europe Network (*Réseau Europe Urbain*), which aims to improve coordination between national and European policy at the city level, working with networks such as URBACT and Eurocities to coordinate approaches and transfer knowledge. All these elements can be seen as impacts of Europeanization, by-products of France's exposure to EU ways of working, with more collaborative processes 'absorbed' into France's approach to its national urban policy.

## Italy

In Italy, the 'urban issue' was formalized in the late 1980s with the creation of the "*Ministero per i problemi delle Aree urbane*" (1987-1993). In the 1990s, several urban programmes were launched inspired in the 'URBAN' approach from the EU. At the same time, local devolution initiatives were strongly promoted (e.g. the direct election of Mayors in 1993). A few years later, the *Bassanini* Reform for 'administrative federalism' (1997) lay the grounds for an explicit recognition in 2001 of metropolitan cities in the Italian Constitution. However, the 'urban issue' became less important in the following years, as continuous political changes in the government made it difficult to formalize

a coherent and explicit urban policy. The Monti Government (2011-2013), which appointed Fabrizio Barca as Minister for Territorial Cohesion, was a turning point. Barca had published an independent report for the European Commission on the reform of EU Cohesion Policy for the period 2014-2020, proposing strong support for the place-based approach (Barca, 2009). He reactivated the urban agenda in Italy with a clear orientation towards the EU's urban development agenda, although this approach was perceived as a response to the impact of the financial crises on real-estate in Italy, as programmes were especially focused on urban renewal and infrastructure.

The government changed in 2013 (Letta Government), in 2014 (Renzi Government), in 2016 (Gentiloni Government) and once again in 2018 (Conte Government). With them the political priorities also changed. In 2015, Renzi implemented the metropolitan reform, with significantly increased powers for 14 major cities (*città metropolitane*). This process was supported by the European multi-fund *National Operational Programme - Metropolitan Cities 2014-2020* (PON METRO), which also aimed to promote the "National Urban Agenda". Despite this, interviewees state that currently there is no integrated 'urban policy', but rather several EU co-funded parallel programmes mainly focused on metropolitan cities.

In relation to the **direction** of Europeanization, there is an incremental 'download' dynamic in Italy. Changes in urban policy reflect an adaptation to European and international paradigms (Alluli and Tortorella, 2013: 10). In this sense, Italy seems to behave as a 'policy-taker'. Supporting this, one policy maker commented that *"if you want to trace policies for cities [in Italy], you have to look at the way in which the European funds are used"*. As expected, the financial framework of Cohesion Policy 2014-2020 had a significant influence on this process. The EU Structural Funds worked as a 'filter' of *issues and procedures* that have been adopted, as one commentator put it *"here is an influence of the EU urban agenda especially in the topics or issues that are filtered into local planning"*. This is particularly evident in the funding framework of Italy's Cohesion Policy 2014-2020. In fact, during the Monti government (2011-2013), in the context of the financial crisis, Barca launched a series of procedural guidelines aimed at making better use of funding opportunities for cities: *"Metodi e obiettivi per un uso efficace dei fondi comunitari 2014-2020"* (2012) and *"Metodi e contenuti sulle priorità in tema di agenda urbana"* (2013). However, at the same time Italy is strongly engaged in city networks, particularly in Eurocities and URBACT. In fact, Italy is one of the countries (together with Spain) with a broader participation in these kinds of programmes. This active role of Italian cities reveals evidence of 'horizontal' Europeanization.

In terms of the **object** of transfer in the 1990s, this relates to the 'complex' and integrated nature of programmes inspired by the URBAN Community Initiative. According to one interviewee, *"they had an integrated, multidisciplinary and participative approach, there was a lot of transfer from URBAN. It was very successful, and it was really impressive"*. The approach was present in several programmes such as the *Programmi Integrati di Intervento* (1992) and the *Contratti di Quartiere* 1997 and 2002, among others.

More recently, 'download' Europeanization has affected not only *content*, but also *policy structure and style*. New *structures* were established in an attempt to institutionalize a multilevel governance and partnership approach in the highly fragmented Italian context. The *'Comitato Interministeriale per le Politiche Urbane'* CIPU (2012) is an example of cross-Ministry working under Monti, that began to establish the national urban agenda, but which was disbanded in 2013 following the change of government. Another initiative, Urban@it, was set up in 2014: a research structure established by a consortium of seven Italian universities, focusing on urban issues. This National Centre for Urban

Policy Studies provides continuity to the urban agenda conversation in a context of significant political discontinuity. Urban@it is actively involved in the urban agenda at the national and local levels, through analysis and dissemination on urban matters. In this regard, respondents also referred to the influence of ‘horizontal’ Europeanization on Italian practice, for example in terms of urban research: *“The Italian government is starting to do like the French government where the Ministry of Infrastructure supports applied urban research through the POCSU national programmes”*.

Italy can be classified as an ‘accommodation’ case in relation to **impact**, rather than ‘absorption’ or ‘transformation’. Respondents noted that there have been changes to the management of urban policy that align more closely with the EU’s emphasis on an integrated multi-level governance approach, but in specific programmes. On the other hand, the Structural Funds have been used to reinforce some national urban initiatives that were already in the pipeline such as the metropolitan reform, waiting for a ‘policy window’. Overall, a number of factors have come together in relation to the impact of Europeanization on urban policy in Italy, with its strong engagement in urban networks (URBACT and Eurocities), but the Structural Funds provided a ‘window of opportunity’ not only to give greater visibility to the ‘urban issue’ but also supporting institutional reforms that have changed the geography of power at the territorial level.

## Spain

Spain has been characterized by a lack of an explicit national urban policy. One of the reasons that explain this is the urban competences framework set by the Constitution (1978), and its evolution over time. Instead of a collaborative framework for policy coordination, the present scenario is highly determined by a logic of defense of self-competences (Parkinson et al., 2012). Interviewees recognize this as one of the main problems in developing an urban agenda in Spain. Another reason is the financial system, based on a hierarchical model that results in the economic dependence of cities on the upper levels of government. This hinders the development of real collaborative relationships between the different government tiers (Navarro et al., 2005). In this framework the initiatives for ISUD at the national level have come hand-in-hand with programmes co-financed by the Structural Funds of the EU (e.g. the URBANA initiative and the *Estrategias de Desarrollo Urbano Sostenible Integrado* - EDUSI). The influence of the EU in this regard has been crucial. Against a backdrop of the development of international urban agendas and the negotiations with the European Commission for the funding period 2014-2020, a new element was introduced in the spring of 2017: the development of the Spanish Urban Agenda, which was finally approved in February 2019. This process has been built on the international urban agendas and proposes to develop a framework for urban policies agreed with the Autonomous Communities, the municipalities, and other relevant stakeholders.

The only initiatives focused explicitly on integrated urban development have been those developed in the context of the EU’s Cohesion Policy (‘download Europeanization’). As De Gregorio Hurtado (2010, 2012, 2017b) and Del Castillo and Haarich (2013) note, EU programmes have prompted an evolution in the content of domestic policies, including an advancement towards more innovative and integrated public management with continuity along four EU funding programming periods (De Gregorio Hurtado, 2018). Local governments have made considerable efforts to align their urban regeneration schemes to the objectives and methodological principles defined in the framework of

Cohesion Policy and the *Urban Acquis* of the EU. This has given rise to the development of in-house knowledge, experience and local capacity (ibid.; Casado et al., 2018; González-Medina & Huete García, 2019).

Regarding the relationship with EU urban policy, the **directional** role of Spain has been fundamentally that of a 'policy-taker'. Nevertheless, some respondents recognized Spain's role in the definition of EU urban policy through the *Toledo Declaration* (2010). This document led to the consolidation of the integrated approach to urban development policies in the EU. 'Horizontal Europeanization' is also strong in Spain, with many cities engaged in activities through Eurocities, URBACT III and the Urban Innovative Actions.

In relation to the **object** of transfer, Spain has transmitted EU policy goals to the local level through the implementation of EU instruments such as URBAN (1994-1999), URBAN II (2000-2006), the *Iniciativa Urbana* (2007-2013), and the *Estrategias de Desarrollo Urbano Sostenible Integrado – EDUSI* (2014-2020). EU urban policy has shifted domestic national urban policy discourse, but also the practice of urban regeneration at the local level (De Gregorio Hurtado, 2017b; Huete, Muñoz and Merinero, 2016).

It is worth noting the different responses given by the officials of the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Public Works regarding the impact of those instruments. Officials from the Ministry of Finance recognized the impact but mentioned that their influence has been limited because of the low number of programmes implemented (29 programmes under URBAN, 10 under URBAN II, and 46 under the 'Iniciativa Urbana'), and pointed to the high potential of the 181 EDUSI currently being developed. Officials from the Ministry of Public Works underlined that those instruments have exerted a crucial influence by introducing new knowledge about urban regeneration to the different levels of government: *"The way of understanding urban policy in Spain is completely aligned with the principles on which urban development in the EU is based"*. Another commented on the importance of knowledge transfer: *"URBAN initiatives have been a source of learning for the cities and an opportunity to translate the main lines of action of EU policies into practice"*.

**Impact** in the Spanish case can be classified as 'transformation', rather than 'accommodation' or 'absorption'. This transformation has taken place on two levels: the policy discourse and the practice of ISUD. Regarding the first, the Spanish Government is fully aligned with EU guidelines. In fact, the EU's urban policy has acted as a driver for the transformation of urban regeneration policy in Spain. As one observer expressed: *"In Spain, there is a policy to address the problems of cities by using EU funds to make urban policy. To be concrete, to force more urban and participatory policies. We could say that in Spain, forced by the circumstances, we had to promote more integrated and participatory urban policies"*.

In 2009, a multi-level network was created, *Red de Iniciativas Urbanas* (RIU), aimed at benchmarking good practice and giving visibility to the urban dimension of Cohesion Policy. This, together with the EDUSI call, and the Spanish Urban Agenda can be understood as clear impacts of Europeanization that promote transformation of the country's approach to urban policy. In a nutshell, the Spanish case shows relevant transformations that operate in the design (e.g. adoption of the integrated approach), policy style (e.g. discourse developed by the different stakeholders), and policy and institutional issues (e.g. the development of the Spanish Urban Agenda, and the RIU), through the process of Europeanization.

## United Kingdom

Over the last 30 years, UK governments have formulated what can be described as a national urban policy, with programmes such as the *Single Regeneration Budget* (1994-2004) and the *New Deal for Communities* (1998-2010), developed within an overall national policy framework. However, interview respondents agreed that currently there is no 'urban policy' as such in the UK. There are several on-going policies with an urban focus, particularly related to the devolution agenda, City Deals and the launch of elected mayors for single local authorities and combined authorities (so-called "Metro Mayors"), but currently there is no policy that can be described as 'urban', as understood here.

However, during the 1990s, when the 'Single Regeneration Budget' (SRB) was in operation, the UK had a significant impact on the EU's approach to developing its urban policy (Tortola, 2012). In relation to **direction**, as a direct example of 'up-load Europeanization', the UK acted as a 'policy shaper', whereby the SRB's approach of integrated, multi-sectoral and multi-level urban development projects was used as the basis of the selection criteria for the individual programmes within each member state, both for URBAN I and URBAN II. The SRB model adopted by the EU also subsequently fed into further iterations of the EU's urban policy, and is currently manifested through ISUD. More recently, respondents also identified the UK as a 'policy-taker'. The increased powers being devolved to Metro Mayors can be read as 'down-load Europeanization' in relation to urban governance. Directly elected mayors are a familiar model of city governance in many EU member states and are promoted at the EU level and their recent introduction in England was perceived by respondents as a transfer of practice from the EU to the English context. Regarding 'horizontal Europeanization', UK cities are well embedded in European urban networks playing an active role in structures such as Eurocities, Birmingham being one of the founding members. For one local authority commentator, "*the fact that you're working on these programmes, you're invited to conferences, meetings and you come across other cities, you learn from each other*", were all seen as circular learning opportunities giving exposure to European approaches.

Back in the 1990s, the **object** of transfer (up-load) was the policy approach taking an integrated and multi-level governance perspective, which was innovative at the time in the EU context and in many other member states. The more recent 'download' has been in *structure* and *style*, rather than content, where the EU has influenced urban policy in the UK. There are increasing examples of cross-Ministry working, such as the establishment of a new "Cities and Local Growth Team", that brings together policy and thinking on urban development and economic growth from two different Ministries, housing (CLG) and business (BEIS). Separately, in a further example of multi-level governance related to urban matters, a non-departmental public agency, Homes England, is increasingly involved with renewed powers as of January 2018 to fund and support affordable housing and housing estate regeneration within a multi-level governance framework. Respondents felt that this partnership approach had been encouraged by working with EU programmes and practices. As one policy practitioner reflected: "*It's the ways in which EU programmes have helped to incentivise particular types of approaches, to lever levels of engagement and funding, which have been quite powerful*".

In relation to the transfer of policy structures, the UK's Core Cities network closely mirrors the organizational structure of Eurocities. The Core Cities network (the 10 largest conurbations in the UK outside London) was established in 1995, as a group of self-appointed cities that collaborate to

tackle urban related issues. They have been instrumental in promoting urban issues at the national level, and in mobilising action to support urban interests.

Given the relatively narrow policy misfit between the EU and the UK, in relation to *impact*, policy changes have been “absorbed” into domestic practice, rather than “accommodated” or “transformed”. Interview respondents commented that locally, EU funding programmes have made a difference in relation to capacity building. In London, for example, the Structural Fund programmes have helped to build capacity in programme and project management related to effective expenditure of funds, especially through thinking strategically about how to deploy funding. These approaches have been incorporated into domestic ‘ways of doing’, although respondents saw these as incremental changes in local practice rather than a substantial sea change.

For the last three decades, the UK’s urban and regional development policy have been closely linked to the logic and architecture of the EU’s Cohesion Policy. At the time of writing, the UK is anticipated to leave the EU at the end of October 2019. While in theory, this limits the potential for further Europeanization, there have been calls for the UK government to reframe its new national regional development programme (the ‘UK Shared Prosperity Fund’) along the lines of the current EU Cohesion Policy framework organized through long-term programming periods, rather than short-term programmes. Europeanization in a post-Brexit era could therefore live on, in the form of both policy structure and style, helping to shape the UK’s urban and regional development programme in the future.

## **Discussion and conclusions**

This paper has examined the role of the EU in the development of urban policy within four different member states. Each country has its own policy priorities, institutional and organisational context, with path dependent trajectories that position them in different spaces vis-à-vis EU urban policy. As Table 4 illustrates, which shows the key features in each member state of the comparative framework of Europeanization, the four countries can be divided into two categories: those that had an initial influence on the development of the EU’s approach to urban development in the 1990s (‘upload Europeanization’): France and the UK; and those deeply influenced by the EU in the development of their urban policy, especially after 2014 (‘download Europeanization’): Italy and Spain. Although all cases experience ‘horizontal Europeanization’, Italy and Spain (our ‘policy takers’) are most engaged. Where there is no explicit national urban policy, the diffusion of the ISUD approach into domestic urban policy frameworks is more intensive.

However, the actual situation is more nuanced, as the study confirms that urban policies in both France and the UK have subsequently been influenced by EU approaches, either in policy content (e.g. urban environmental issues in France) or process (e.g. funding strategies and networking in the UK). Furthermore, the UK’s unique situation, currently in the process of exiting the EU, also opens up possibilities for further ‘download Europeanization’, through the potential adoption of the EU’s model of programming for urban and regional development initiatives in the UK, post-Brexit.

**Table 4. Main tendencies resulting from comparative analysis after tracing urban Europeanization**

<i>Starting point of cases:</i>	<b>France</b>	<b>Italy</b>	<b>Spain</b>	<b>UK</b>	<b>UE</b>
<b>Urban national policy?</b>	<b>Explicit</b>	<b>Implicit</b>	<b>Implicit</b>	<b>Explicit</b>	<b>ISUD</b>
<b>Direction of transfer</b>	<b>Upload</b> ↑↓ <i>Download</i>	<b>Download</b> ↓↔ <i>Horizontal</i>	<b>Download</b> ↓↔ <i>Horizontal</i>	<b>Upload</b> ↑↓ <i>Download</i>	↑
	<i>Logic of economic dependence</i>				↓
<b>Object of transfer</b>	Content Structure Style	Structure	Content Style	Content Structure Style	↓
<b>Impact</b>	<b>Absorption</b>	<b>Accommodation</b>	<b>Transformation</b>	<b>Absorption</b>	↓
	<i>The impact reflects the 'misfit' between EU urban policy and domestic urban policies</i>				↓
<i>End point of cases:</i>	<b>Share of common elements of the EU ISUD approach</b>				

Source: Own elaboration

Likewise, in Spain and Italy, although both member states are affected by EU policy through ‘download Europeanization’, the analysis shows that there are differences in the ways in which these policies have impacted on national systems. In Spain, there has been no interest in developing an urban policy. Indeed, the recently adopted Spanish urban agenda was a compromise ‘imposed’ by the EU in the Partnership agreement for the programming period 2014-2020. However, given that EU funding is linked to aligning national programmes with EU priorities, Spain has transferred the EU’s approach through different domestic ERDF-funded programmes (e.g. *Iniciativa Urbana* and EDUSI). In Italy, there were already strong moves towards the EU’s position on urban policy, in particular through the work of Minister Barca, who had worked closely with the European Commission as an independent advisor. EU approaches to urban policy are therefore seen as being ‘accommodated’ in national policy with greater facility, through moves towards decentralization. In other words, ERDF-funded programmes have been used as a ‘window of opportunity’ to carry out proposals that were already in the pipeline or latent in the national political agenda. It is worth noting the complexity of the processes and how they appear to be full of apparent contradictions: while Italy has abandoned the idea of developing its national urban agenda, Spain has presented its agenda in February 2019, recognizing that it is influenced by the Urban Agenda for the EU. In any case, the national metropolitan reform has been conducted with the support of EU structural funding.

These findings have wider significance, not only for the reach and impact of Europeanization, but also for broader trends related to austerity urbanism. We suggest here that a process of ‘variegated Europeanization’ is taking place, with variations due to path dependent adaptations of domestic urban policies, that influence both the reach (direction and object) as well as the impact of Europeanization. It could be suggested that the lack of an explicit national urban policy leaves a vacuum that can be filled by the EU model. However, the two member states in question, Italy and Spain, are both in a precarious economic position, particularly following the global economic crisis and subsequent austerity policies. One of the conditions of Cohesion Policy funding in the current period (2014-2020) is that a minimum of 5% of the national ERDF envelope be allocated to



sustainable urban development. Thus, countries in an unstable economic position are more open to readily adopting the EU urban development model as a means of accessing funding. In contrast, for example, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have not engaged with the sustainable urban development model in the current round, with England being the only UK country to integrate it into its programmes. As Huggins (2018) argues, political actors follow a 'rationalist logic', weighing up the benefits of Europeanization, such as additional resources gained and competitive advantage, against the potential costs and constraints. In Spain and Italy, engagement with the EU urban development model is rationally driven, motivated by the need to access EU funding in a context of public sector austerity cuts. In the UK and France, the logic for influencing the URBAN initiative and subsequent policy approaches lay in promoting their vision of urban policy, to thus minimise the need to reformulate their urban approach in European programmes in the future.

Evidence from this paper therefore suggests that in relation to the model presented in Figure 1, member states are to a certain degree converging on an aligned vision of an EU approach to urban policy, within a context of variegated Europeanization. Under the programming period 2014-2020, ISUD has been a key driver in influencing goals, procedures and structures of urban policy processes. With the current discussions about the future of Cohesion Policy post 2020, the expectation is that, by keeping similar mechanisms in the new regulations (e.g. Article 7, city networking, capacity building, etc.), the dynamics of Europeanization will lead to a transformation or accommodation of EU member states' national urban agendas, with continued convergence in terms of issues and processes.

The UK, however, is embarking on its own urban and regional policy development for the post-Brexit era. There is an inherent tension in the post-Brexit governance landscape in relation to urban policy. The three-way relations between cities, the national government and the EU that characterize EU Cohesion Policy will be severed, and power relations will realign between different scales of governance and territorial administrations, which will introduce new power asymmetries into urban policy (Sykes and Schulze Bäing, 2017). Research suggests that socio-spatial inequalities in the UK are set to worsen after Brexit, particularly in already declining areas that are less resilient in the face of economic shocks (Billing, McCann, and Ortega-Argilés, 2019). The implications would suggest that there is all the more need for a targeted locally-administered place-based urban policy to support vulnerable places and communities in disadvantaged urban areas, whether they are inside the EU or not.

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**Annex II. Comparative framework for the analysis of case studies**

	Evidence in the discourse related to...
<b>Direction</b>	Vertical integration
	Horizontal integration
	Integration in networks
<b>Object</b>	Type of approach to urban matters and evolution over time
	Existence of urban programmes and other instruments (beyond spatial planning instruments), from 1990s.
<b>Impact</b>	Level of integration of explicit EU urban policy principles (e.g. integrated sustainable urban development, ISUD) into national urban policies
	Funding source

Source: Own elaboration