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A conceptual device for spreading (good) territorial governance in Europe

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Second ESPON 2013 Scientific Report  
December 2013

# Science in support of European Territorial Development and Cohesion



ESPON 2013 Programme

Coordination Unit  
4, rue Erasme  
L-1468 Luxembourg  
Grand Duchy of Luxembourg  
Phone: +352 42 59 91 4700  
Fax: +352 42 59 91 4701  
Email: info@espon.eu

This publication is based on papers and the discussion of the ESPON Scientific Conference held on 12-13 September 2013. The papers were prepared by authors from transnational project groups carrying out applied research projects and targeted analyses for ESPON as well as authors from the professional and academic organisations AESOP, ECTP-CEU, ERSA, EUGEO and RSA.

The present publication was processed by the ESPON Coordination Unit and edited by Frank Holstein, Sabine Zillmer and Kai Böhme from Spatial Foresight. The single papers have been reviewed by Gordon Dabinett, Cliff Hague, Jacek Zaucha and Sabine Zillmer. Gordon Dabinett and Cliff Hague did the language editing of the papers.

Information on the ESPON Programme and projects, the complete reports and list of partners involved can be found at [www.espon.eu](http://www.espon.eu)

The ESPON website always presents the latest developments in the ESPON Programme and findings from ESPON projects. It offers the opportunity to consult in detail ESPON publications, tools, project reports and indicators available in the ESPON database.

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The content of this report is based on the results of applied research projects by transnational teams of research taking part in the ESPON 2013 Programme. As such, the maps and texts do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the ESPON Monitoring Committee.

The ESPON 2013 Programme, the European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion, supports policy development with evidence and analyses on territorial dynamics within Europe. ESPON's main activity is to deliver new European facts and understanding for policy makers via applied research projects, targeted analyses and analytical tools.

One of the objectives of the ESPON Programme is to support the European wide research community in the field of European territorial science and to involve a wide European network of scientists and practitioners in the field of territorial research and its related fields. A large involvement is indispensable to get high qualified research capacity in ESPON projects and at the same time to increase interest and competences in research on European territorial structures, trends, perspectives and impacts of EU sector policy.

The ESPON Programme has hitherto promoted the scientific component of the programme through scientific conferences and workshops, cooperation with European organisations in the fields of regional science, geography and spatial planning, as well as with a dedicated series of ESPON reports ("blue series") mainly targeting the scientific community. The ESPON 2006 Programme published two Scientific Reports and the first ESPON 2013 Scientific Report was published in 2010.

This second ESPON 2013 Scientific Report presents papers from both ESPON projects and authors from several European professional and academic organisations. The report is the result of the ESPON Scientific Conference "Science in support of European Territorial Development and Cohesion" held on the 12th and 13th of September 2013 in Luxembourg. This ESPON Scientific Conference targeted territorial research and analysis and continued the building of a European scientific research community that can provide evidence capable of supporting a stronger territorial dimension in policy considerations. In this context, the conference was part of a scientific dialogue to support a stronger territorial dimension in policy considerations. This is reflected in the aim of the conference, which was on the one hand to provide a good overview and scientific dialogue of the progress made in the scientific field during the current programming period. On the other hand, on-going ESPON projects as well as researchers outside the ESPON network had the opportunity to exchange their views of new and innovative research.

This Scientific Report contains 34 scientific papers, prepared by researchers involved in ESPON projects and authors from the European professional and academic organisations AESOP, ECTP-CEU, ERSA, EUGEO and RSA. The papers were presented and discussed during the conference workshop sessions, after which they have been reviewed by Prof. Gordon Dabinett, Prof. Emer. Cliff Hague, Assoc. Prof. Jacek Zaucha and Dr Sabine Zillmer. All authors have used the remarks made by the reviewers to strengthen their papers. The results can be found in Chapters 2 to 4.

Chapter 1 gives an introduction to the policy framework ESPON is dealing with and provides an overview and structure of all papers included. In addition, a number of overarching points emerged which are discussed giving some ideas for the future.

A third ESPON 2013 Scientific Report is planned for end 2014 taking stock of the progress ESPON projects made in the scientific field of territorial development and cohesion.

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### 4.1.3 A conceptual device for spreading (good) territorial governance in Europe

Umberto Janin Rivolin\* and Giancarlo Cotella#

#### I. INTRODUCTION

Is it possible to spread good territorial governance in Europe and, if so, in which ways can such aim be achieved? This paper presents a conceptual device, developed within the ESPON project TANGO (Territorial Approaches for New Governance), usable to manage the spread of examples or “features” of good territorial governance in Europe. It is worth clarifying that this paper does not face the issues of defining what is “good” in territorial governance, nor of what can or should be transferred in this complex domain; problems that the aforementioned research project has also met. It focuses rather on modalities of transfer, particularly on “paths and means” through which (good) territorial governance might pass from one place to another or others, and on their major strengths and weaknesses.

In order to achieve this aim *vis-à-vis* the well-known complexities of policy transfer (see, amongst others: Dolowitz & Marsh 1996, 2000; James & Lodge 2003), the proposed framework builds on the authors’ previous reflections about Europeanization of territorial governance (Cotella & Janin Rivolin 2010). This approach welcomes the assumption that, for institutional matters, policy transfer in the European Union (EU) and Europeanization are arguably two sides of the same coin (Wishlade et al. 2003). The EU is indeed an institutional context in which «the apparatus of policy diffusion and development has transnationalised in such a profound and irreversible way as to render anachronistic the notion of independent, “domestic” decision-making» (Peck 2011: 774). The institutional nature of territorial governance and of its changing is thus a fixed point of the proposed conceptual device: therefore, whereas potentially generalisable and adaptable to other institutional contexts, its application is here tailored on the EU’s context.

Overall, this proposal may cast further light on European territorial governance as an evolutionary process based on articulated forms of policy transfer between the EU and the Member States. It is relevant for policymaking insofar as it distinguishes various opportunities to spread good territorial governance in Europe, in-so-doing relating to the thematic objective “Enhancing institutional capacity” (11) within the EU Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF).

The following section (II) exposes the theoretical foundations of the conceptual device. Three further sections illustrate how this allows identifying respectively a *dialogic mode* (III), an *operational mode* (IV) and an *institutional mode* (V) for the spread of (good) territorial governance in Europe. A final section (VI) provides a short synopsis and some concluding remarks.

#### II. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

There exist several definitions of territorial governance, supporting in general that it concerns the policy process driving the spatial organisation of social life. Belonging in nature to the domain of those artificial phenomena known as “institutions”, the genesis and development of territorial governance can be imagined – as for any institution – as a cyclical process of human trial and error based on «(i) first, the generation of variety (in particular, a variety of practices and rules); (ii) second, competition and reduction of the variety (of rules) via selection; (iii) third, propagation and some persistence of the solution (the system of rules) selected» (Moroni 2010: 279).

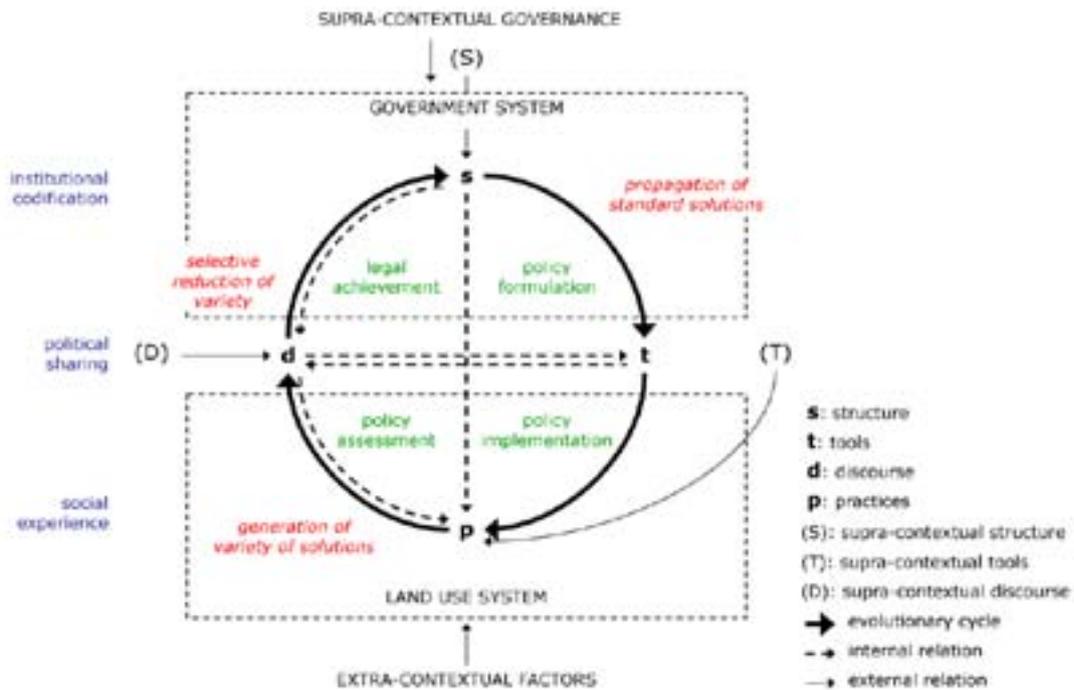
Applied in comparative spatial planning research, these concepts have led to the representation of a cyclical process that connects the “government system” with the “land use system” through the activity of *practices, discourse, structure* and *tools* of territorial governance in each institutional context (Figure 4.3). This “evolutionary cycle” of territorial governance, composed by recurring phases of policy formulation, implementation, assessment and possible legal achievement, appears

\* Full professor of spatial planning, Politecnico di Torino, Italy (umberto.janinrivolin@polito.it).

# Assistant professor of spatial planning, Politecnico di Torino, Italy (giancarlo.cotella@polito.it).

to be intertwined with further internal and external relations, equally influent. There are thus different points of entry that may influence positively or negatively the process (either from top-down or bottom-up initiatives), which however remains in nature a process based on the “human trial and error” and on its collective elaboration, because it concerns institutionalisation.

**Figure 4.3 Evolutionary cycle of territorial governance**

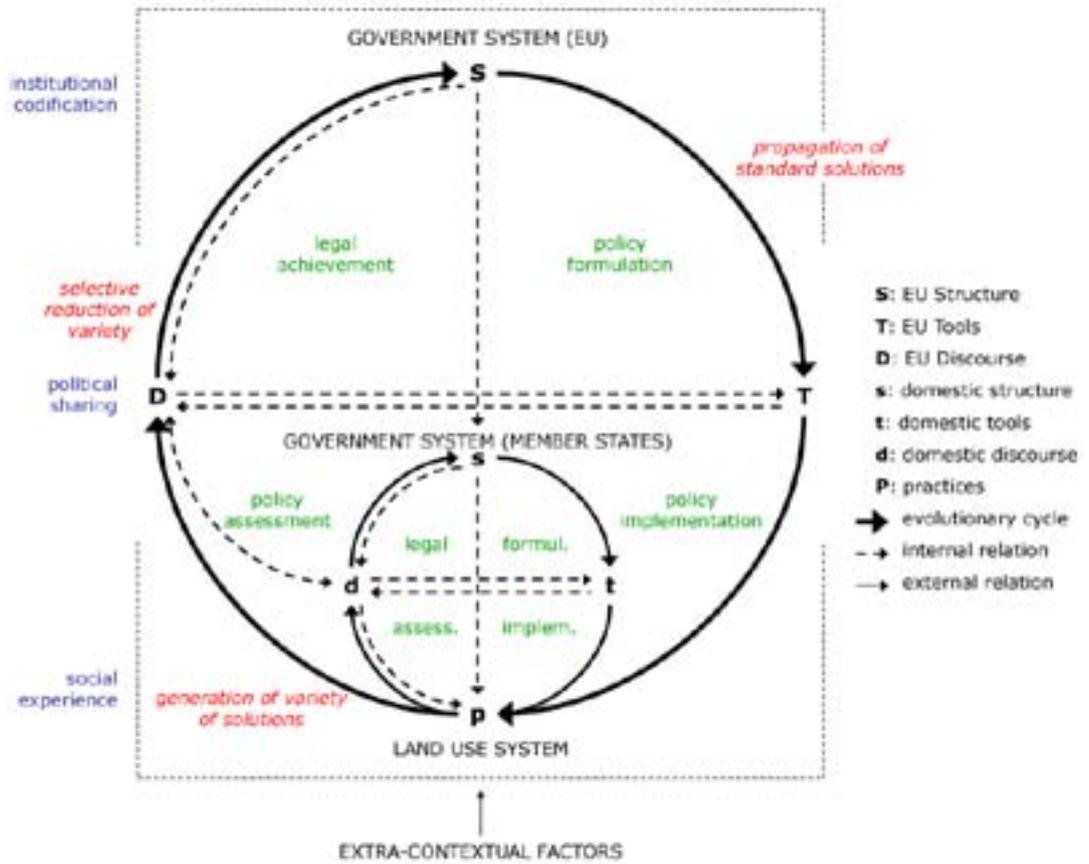


Source: Janin Rivolin, 2012 (adapted)

The EU institutional context is notoriously characterised by the simultaneous activity of one supra-national cycle (the EU) and various domestic cycles (as many as the EU Member States). European territorial governance should therefore be represented as simultaneously driven by: (a) territorial governance as it occurs in domestic domains; (b) EU-level territorial governance taking a similar form and “enveloping” all domestic domains; and (c) crucial relations between the two (Figure 4.4).

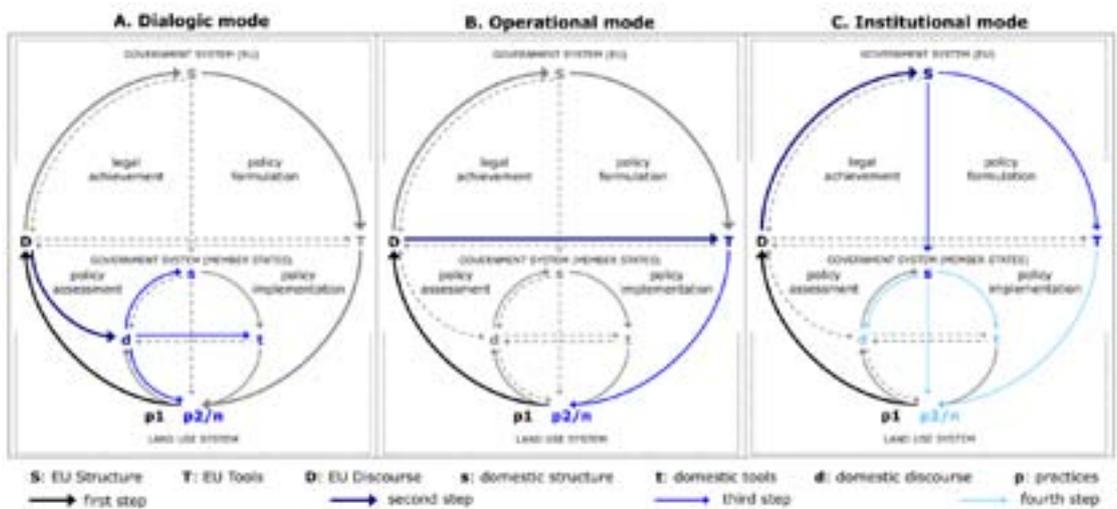
If the descriptive capacity of this diagram is accepted as reliable, the identification of modes for spreading examples or features of good territorial governance in Europe can be derived from the various “paths” that policy transfer is expected to take from a given “good practice” (p1, in a certain domestic context) to a new one replicated somewhere else (p2/n, in another or other domestic contexts). A first observation in this respect is that the initial step of these possible paths is anyhow directed from p(1) to D, that is from the supposed good practice to the “EU discourse”, i.e. the virtual place in which single social experiences are filtered and shared, via selection by policy assessment, in the form of ideas and proposals for good territorial governance at the EU level (e.g. the ESPON platform). This means that possible modes for spreading territorial governance in Europe are all pivoted on the activity of a EU discourse on territorial governance, more or less structured and coherent, and are distinguishable for the different paths that ideas and proposals can take from here in order to reach and influence other social experiences (p2/n). In particular, three distinct modes of spread are identifiable (Figure 4.5), as described in the following sections.

Figure 4.4 Evolutionary cycle of European territorial governance



Source: Cotella & Janin Rivolin, 2010 (adapted)

Figure 4.5 Modes for the spread of (good) territorial governance in Europe



### III. DIALOGIC MODE OF TRANSFER

A *dialogic mode* for spreading good territorial governance initiates with the capacity of the EU discourse to influence one or more domestic discourses ( $D \rightarrow d2/n$ ) and, from here, relevant practices in direct or indirect ways (i.e. via domestic tools or structure). This occurs when «in its “weakest” form, European policy [...] affects domestic arrangements [...] indirectly, namely by *altering the beliefs and expectations* of domestic actors. [...] Hence, the domestic impact of European policies is primarily based on a cognitive logic» (Knill & Lehmkuhl 1999: 2). This kind of “discursive integration” «can be successful when there are strong policy communities active at European and national levels and direct links between them» (Böhme 2002: III). Potential borrowers can therefore exploit this opportunity of importing new “components of exchange” (e.g. ideas, principles, philosophy; OECD 2001) depending on the actual level of integration of a domestic discourse ( $d2/n$ ) with the EU discourse (D).

A direct declination of the dialogic mode concerns the transfer of features of good territorial governance from the discursive arenas into practices ( $p2/n$ ). The plethora of bilateral or multilateral projects and mutual learning exchanges resulting from European territorial cooperation (cross-border, transnational and interregional programmes) are clear examples of this process. Domestic practices may be influenced also indirectly in a longer period, if domestic discourse is able to have an effect on domestic structure ( $s2/n$ ) or tools ( $t2/n$ ).

### IV. OPERATIONAL MODE OF TRANSFER

An *operational mode* for spreading good territorial governance concerns the transfer of insights gained in the EU discourse into EU tools ( $D \rightarrow T$ ), which are then capable of influencing practices in various domestic contexts. This mode is effective insofar as «European influence is confined to *altering domestic opportunity structures*, and hence the distribution of power and resources between domestic actors» (Knill & Lehmkuhl 1999: 1). In practice, features of good territorial governance can be translated into other kinds of components (e.g. methods, techniques, know-how), which are transferred rather “directly” to new potential experiences in various domestic contexts ( $p2/n$ ) via economic conditionality.

One example is the EU establishment of Territorial Employment Pacts in 1997, based on the Italian experience of “Territorial Pacts” (Law 662/1996) that was developed since the early 1990s as a new means for the development of depressed areas. This led to the launch of 89 pilot actions in various EU countries, and later to a transfer of the approach into the mainstream of Structural Funds in 2000-06, with an influence on domestic practices in all EU countries. A similar example concerns the well-known initiative of Urban Pilot Projects (and later of the Urban Community Initiative), based on the French experience.

### V. INSTITUTIONAL MODE OF TRANSFER

An *institutional mode* for spreading good territorial governance occurs when the EU discourse is codified within the EU structure ( $D \rightarrow S$ ), inducing changes into domestic structures and, from here, to respective practices, or into EU tools with effects described in section IV. In this case, «European policy-making may trigger domestic change by prescribing concrete institutional requirements with which member states must comply; that is, EU policy “positively” prescribes an *institutional model* to which domestic arrangements have to be adjusted» (Knill & Lehmkuhl 1999: 1). This mode implies that features of good territorial governance are translated into further kinds of components (e.g. rules, codes and laws). Many local experiences may be reached this way through a longer but “enveloping” process of policy transfer, regarding an influence in terms of legal conditionality filtered by domestic structures ( $s2/n$ ) plus a possible economic conditionality induced by EU tools (T).

An example of this may be the increasingly widespread adoption of the principle of “sustainable development” in territorial governance practices in Europe after the establishment of a series of EU directives (e.g. Habitat 92/43/CE, SEA 2001/42/CE). These have progressively transferred this principle via domestic structures, as well as EU Tools (Structural Funds programmes, Agenda 21 etc.).

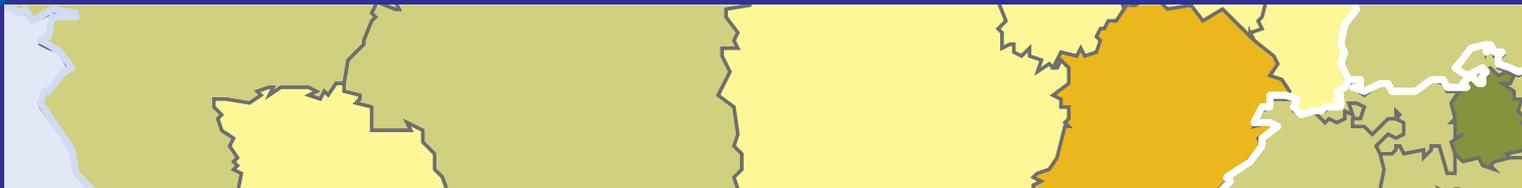
## VI. SYNOPSIS AND CONCLUSION

A comparison of the presented modes of transfer generally suggests that the *dialogic mode* occurs more “easily” than the others, because it tends to take shape in a voluntary way through processes of lesson drawing. This means also that it may be less “secure”, because its only constraints depend on the willingness to adopt the solution to borrow in the context in which it should be adopted. On the contrary, the *institutional mode* has the potential to produce the deepest and widest impact through rather coercive processes of policy transfer based both on legal and economic conditionality. Its occurrence is however very difficult, because the making of rules or codes with a universal value poses higher transaction costs (Alexander, 1992). Finally, the *operational mode* is relatively complex, but apparently the most direct in stimulating the emergence of new practices in several domestic contexts.

In the framework of the ESPON TANGO research project, the conceptual device here presented was helpful to structure a handbook for stakeholders (still in draft), insofar as it enabled – after some simplification – the successful distribution of messages to practitioners, policy makers and decision makers respectively. However, a deeper analysis of relationships between policies/actions and their specific place-based characteristics might improve the understanding of processes of “filtering out” and “in”, assisting in how the features of good territorial governance can be extrapolated from one context and taken on board in another.

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The ESPON 2013 Programme supports policy development in relation to the aim of territorial cohesion and harmonious development of the European territory. It provides comparable information, evidence, analysis, and scenarios on territorial dynamics, which reveal territorial capitals and development potentials of regions and larger territories contributing.

This Scientific Report publishes 34 papers on understanding territorial realities, measuring territorial outcomes and revising science-policy translation. The papers have been prepared by researchers involved in ESPON projects and by authors from the European professional and academic organisations AESOP, ECTP-CEU, ERSA, EUGEO and RSA.

The ESPON Scientific Conference “Science in support of European Territorial Development and Cohesion” held on 12-13 September 2013 in Luxembourg has been used to present, discuss and reflect upon the papers.

The close cooperation with the European professional and academic organisations mentioned ensured an exchange of experiences with other scientific researchers in the same field and enabled all authors to sharpen the methodologies used and presented.

The purpose of this report is to communicate and discuss scientific elements such as concepts, methodologies, indicators, typologies, tools, maps and models developed and/or used within the ESPON projects and the European scientific research community in the field of territorial development and cohesion. As part of the dialogue on territorial development and cohesion you are welcome to engage with ESPON via [www.espon.eu](http://www.espon.eu).

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