EUROPEANIZATION OF TERRITORIAL PLANNING PRACTICE IN ALBANIA
CASE STUDY ANALYSIS OF THE GENERAL NATIONAL PLAN AND
INTEGRATED CROSS-SECTORIAL PLAN FOR THE COAST

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Abstract
Albania’s long standing objective of becoming part of the EU reflected its impacts also in the planning system. Hence in 2006, affected by the European Integration processes but also from strong “internal” shocks the Albanian Government decided to initiate a process for reforming the planning system (Çobo, E., and Toto, R., 2010). It was decided to change from an “urban planning”, rigid, physical, technical and aesthetical process towards an integrated, comprehensive and strategic approach.
According to different authors, the impacts of “Europeanization” can be seen in different ways also in the planning system (Faludi 2010). However, for the purpose of this paper the authors have decided to focus on three main aspects for the analysis such as the legal basis for territorial planning, the terminology used in the spatial planning documents and the reference to European Directives and visions, as well as the techniques of expressing visions through cartographic expression.
The paper firstly tackles the complex theoretical issue of measuring a change in a planning culture in a given place by a strong discourse analysis on different publications (Gemitis 2012, Albrechts, L (2004), Othengrafen, F. (2014), Othengrafen, F. & Reimer, M. (2013), Reimer, M. Getimis, P. & Blotevogel, H. H. (2014)). Afterwards focuses on four case studies in the Albanian context to measure the level of Europeanization through the three above mentioned indicators such as legal framework, terminology and reference to EU documents and last but not the least cartographic expressions. In the end these indicators are used as a framework to analyze territorial planning experiences in the Albania at the national level (GNTP and ICSP Coast 2016) and at the local Level by comparing the evolution of the territorial planning practice in the municipality of Tirana from 2012 to 2016 (draft plan).

Key words: spatial planning, planning culture, planning practice, Europeanization, visualization, EU

Introduction
The political, ideological and economic change of the system faced institution with the challenge of adapting to new sectorial reforms as well as the challenge of facing a new mentality in terms of use of the territory and its resources. Since 1991, Albania has a long standing objective of joining the European Union. Albania is influenced in different ways by the EU, such as through adaptation and adoption of different EU policies and directives. Evolution of legislation in Albania in recent years has brought change in the territorial planning conception, expanding the focus from simply "urban" towards a territorial focus. In 2013/2014 the Albanian Government, led by the Ministry of Urban Development and the National Territorial Planning Agency, initiated the process of drafting three important national spatial planning documents such as the “General National Territorial Plan”, the “Integrated Cross Sectorial Plan for the Coast” and the “Integrated Cross Sectorial Plan for the economic zone Tirane-Durres” (the first two being the case studies of this paper).
The increased activity at the European Union level as well as the intensive integration processes have deep impacts not only at legal and political levels but also social and cultural implications, leading academics to study and research on the process of Europeanisation. The paper represents an analysis of the main changes in the Albanian planning system during the period 1991-2016 with main reference on the Europeanization. Afterwards, the focus is placed on planning practice, by analyzing two cases at the national level. The analysis is based on a literature review of the terminology and the cartographic expression of the vision. The review is also based on participant observations as both authors have been involved in the process.

1. Defining Europeanization

Europeanization is a term which has many different meanings or to put it in Olsen’s (2002) terms “many faces”. This metaphor hints that there is no single grand theory of Europeanization that can help us understand how institutions co-evolve through processes of mutual adaptation. Nor is there a single set of simplifying assumptions about change, institutions and actors that will capture the complexity of European transformations” (Id. Ibid.: 944).

The research focus of Europeanization varies in themes and levels of governmental structures as well as policy making processes (Ladrech, 1994; Ioakimidis, 1996; Majone, 1997; Featherstone, 1998; Lawton, 1999; Cope, 2001), administrative structure (Spanou, 1998), spatial planning cultures and processes (Faludi, 2004; Faludi 2008), economic policy (Dyson, 2000), and culture and identity (Hedetoft, 1995). The great potential of the concept of Europeanisation according to Radaelli (2004:2) is to use it as a multi-faceted phenomenon “in search of explanation, not the explanation itself” (Radaelli, 2004: 2). In addition to this, Radaelli (ibid:6) suggests that there are three main forms of Europeanisation influences such as governance, discourse and institutionalization. According to Radaelli (2008), there are some differences between the types of learning processes, namely institutional learning and social learning. The latter, occurs when due to exposure to new knowledge or discourses, may lead actors to drafting or reformulating policies and actions in greater and deeper form, bringing new forms of public policy processes, hence resulting in an institutional change. Whereas institutional learning, means that actors change strategies and policies without having acquired a deeper understanding of the concepts of the discourse or without altering their preferences. This type of learning usually is limited to copying EU policies and concepts at the domestic level (Schmidt and Radaelli 2004).

![Figure 1.](image1)

2. Spatial Planning Culture

A growing number of academics have taken an interest on the ways that Europeanization influences spatial planning such as Janin Rivolin and Faludi (2005); Zonneveld, (2005); Nadin, (2007); Waterhout, (2007); Faludi, 2008; Nadin and Stead, 2008). Many attempts focus only on the legal system, planning systems and the processes rely also on other more “soft” aspects such as planning culture. Although, there is no single definition of the concept of planning culture, the below definition, offers a comprehensive overview of the meaning of the concept: “Planning culture is (...) the way in which in some historical moments a (situated national, regional or urban) society has institutionalized planning practices and discourses. In
other words, values, ways of defining problems, rules, instruments, evaluation criteria, professional/expert roles and knowledge, and the relations between institutions and actors, and among State, planners and civil society” (Vettoretto, 2009: 189). The work done by Othengrafen, F., (2010) the culturalised planning model, consist in three analytical dimensions: planning artifacts (manifest culture), planning environment (both manifest and no manifest) and societal environment (no manifest culture). For the purpose of this paper only the planning artefacts will be taken in consideration.

2.1 Visualization in spatial planning
Conceptualization of the territory through spatial images is an integral part of planning. In most traditions of spatial planning in Europe, planning policy documents include a symbolic representation of the territory in the form of icons, diagrams and maps. The illustration of spatial policy options through maps and other cartographic representations can be very powerful both in the planning process and in communicating the key messages of planning strategies. Drawn images are used to support verbal statements of policies, or they directly express policies (Faludi, 1996a), and through their communicative power and clarity might ‘contribute more to achieving certain political goals than legal and financial instruments’ (Kunzmann, 1996: 144). Spatial planning strategies outside the legal framework could take various forms and often are described as spatial visions, spatial development perspectives, Leitbild (while in the French- and English-speaking context normative and non-binding planning strategies are frequently referred to as ‘spatial visions’, the German-speaking planning community has made more use of the terms Leitbilder or guiding principles, S.Duhr (2007), depending on the context and cultures of planning that participate in their preparation. The word ‘vision’ generally refers to a predicted future state of affairs, perhaps a desired outcome in the long term, and increasingly, in recognition of past failures to predict, to a vision of the future that can be ‘invented’ (Shipley, 2002). A list of indicators has been developed through literature review, which not only helps in analyzing their cartographic representation but also the way Europeanization has influenced this process.

2.2 Analyzing spatial visions
According to V. Liesbeth and M. Philippe (2005) the main goal of a map is to be clear in the process of communicating spatial information to the user. The effectiveness to what extent the information transfer occurs is called the communicative map quality. In order to compare the quality of maps in different settings we need an analytical approach, which is based on specifications, rules and instructions for generating these maps. To conduct comparative analysis of graphical structure (Pickles, 1992) of cartographical representation are chosen three categories: level of abstraction; level of complexity and the use of colors and symbols on the maps which according to V. Liesbeth and M. Philippe (2005) are defined as aesthetic map quality. The level of abstraction relates to a more detailed (or ‘scientific’) versus a more abstract (‘artistic’) cartographic representation in spatial plans. The level of abstraction can give clues about the understanding of planning with regard to a more regulative or discretionary approach, but also about experiences of different planning traditions with ‘mapping’ in more informal planning processes. Thus, it communicates much about the reliability and binding character of planning policy (S.Duhr, 2007). The complexity of cartographic representations is understood as an expression of the number of elements (symbols), and the number of categories listed in the key. Assuming that there is limited overlap of elements within one category, the policy map can still be expected to be of medium complexity and easy to read (even if the number of elements is high, but the number of categories low). Nevertheless, the more elements (symbols) and categories are included in the cartographic representations of planning instruments the more complex the ‘map’ appears overall, which might give hints about the role of this instrument in the planning process as well as about the intended audience, as a very complex map might not easily be understood by lay people (S.Duhr, 2007). Because the aesthetic map quality is seen as an important element of the research on the issue, it is supposed to be tested through two components: rules of design according to the theory of Gestalt and theory of colors by Johannes Itten.

The theory of Gestald contains essential and universal principles, sometimes called “laws of perceptual organization.” Terms may vary from one theorist to another, but according to D. Chang, et al (2002), there are some of the key laws that have significant implications in digital design: law of balance/symmetry; law of closure; law of focal point; color; size; law of similarity; law of unity/harmony; law of continuity; repetition; rhythm. These principles are used to create the relationship between map elements in such way that can create a language that is readable for the professionals and the community. Of all forms of nonverbal communication, the immediate method to convey messages through visual side is the color.
Colors not only help highlight or reinforce information, but can also be used to transmit a certain condition, a certain time period, or stir an emotional response to information provided to the recipient. In the process of preparing a map, we should deal with aspects of the design, not only because of the aesthetic, but also for the purpose of understanding of the recipient of the information. Theory of colors by J.Itten (1970) can be very helpful to understand how colors can be used.

3. The influence of Europeanization in Albania

3.1 Evolution of Spatial Planning System in Albania (1991-2016)

According to the MUD (2014) the spatial planning system in Albania has gone through three main periods, 1993-1998, 1998-2006, 2006-nowadays. The period between 1990-1993, can be considered as the grey period in planning. The new law on urban planning was approved in 1993. It was merely an attempt to adapt the previous legislation with the new situation of market economy. During this period, planning was only conceived in terms of urban areas and land use. Mostly regulatory, through very strict rules and very few instruments and the main objective was to define the architectonic and urbanistic conditions for development. The main instruments of land-use planning were the master plan, the general regulatory plan and the partial plans. One important issue was also the definition of the “yellow line” (Aliaj B, 2004, 2008, Aliaj et al 2009) the suburban border. Planning only occurred within the urban areas defined by the yellow line.

In 1998, a new law with regard to “urban planning” was approved. It brought improvements with regard to the planning process. The inclusion of strategic plans within the framework of urban planning was a key improvement. Anyhow, even in this case, the planning approach remains within the framework of “regulatory urban planning”. The system was slow to react, and mainly conceived as an instrument for building permissions rather than the broader context of development.

In 2006, the aim was not just to create a new legislation but to change the system and the approach in planning from a more regulatory one towards a more spatial/territorial planning approach. The new legislation brought new instruments as well as new institutions to the playing field in planning by taking a more spatial approach. It can be said that to a certain extent, the newly created spatial planning system in Albania refers and is similar to many north-west European countries, at least from a formal perspective.

In addition, Europeanization of the spatial planning system, can be seen also from article 4, point gj) of the planning legislation, where it is clearly identified that spatial planning should be harmonized with the European Union approach in spatial planning, as well as converge with sectorial policies such as environment, transport, protected areas etc. In addition to this, article 16, point 2e, defines that the National General Territorial Plan should be in line with the strategic objectives of the ESDP. This is a remarkable, a country which is not even in the EU makes reference to the ESDP. Given that the EU, has no competences in spatial planning, this is a form of bracing the European perspective from a domestic perspective. In this case, most of the “Europeanization of the spatial planning legislation” has not occurred through direct impact of the EU, but mostly through a process of learning.

3.2 Analysis of Case Study, GNTP and ICSP Coast

General National Territorial Plan is an initiative taken by the government with the proposal of Ministry of Urban Development. This plan will guide the sustainable use and exploitation of the resources and potentials of Albania. Meanwhile the Integrated Cross-Sectorial Plan aims to develop strategically for the coast, which is conceived as an area of national economic importance. This plan will serve as a regulatory system to ensure standards in planning and ensuring quality instruments that provide tourist services and economic development. Both plans have been developed through an inter-ministerial group led by the NTPA.

The vision of the GNTP: “Albania, an integrated center in the European economic system and infrastructure, a diversified and competitive economy in the Balkan space, a state that seeks equality in access, infrastructure, economy and knowledge. It provides protection of natural heritage, historical and cultural heritage with the aim to become a unique destination.”

Meanwhile the vision of the ICSCP: Coast, as sea-land binomial important national asset and an integral part of the Mediterranean network. Well managed space where economic development needs and local needs are harmonized with the necessity of protecting cultural, natural and historical assets. Authentic destination, diverse and clean.”
3.2.1 Spatial Planning Terminology and Reference to EU
The GNTP makes a strong reference to European initiatives such as the ESDP and the ESPON projects on defining a Vision for Europe. By comparing the objectives of the GNTP with the objectives of the ESDP and the ESPON project for the Vision for Europe 2050 there is a convergence in terms of themes and objectives. The terminology used in this case is convergent to the EU terminology with terms such as cohesion, sustainability, resilience, polycentricism, integration etc. However, these broad objectives are not met with programs, specific policies and projects. Hence, it does not reflect a process of domestic change and adaptation of these terminology or guidance. Being the first spatial plan of this scale for Albania, it is understandable that the document cannot be complete, fully comprehensive and in depth as other European countries with vast experience in the field have. Here we are dealing with a “institutional” process of learning where terminology and objectives are borrowed by European documents.

Another topic/term which can be discussed in terms of Europeanization is the hierarchy of centers. It is clearly stated that the methodology was based on Crystaller’s model of central place theory, which opens up to a new set of policy drawing processes. However, the results, are mostly descriptive, rather than analytical and backed by instrument to materialize the concept. It is an example of “institutional” learning, as both methodologically as well as instrumentally the theory is difficult to implement.

In terms of transport, the plan makes a strong connection to the TEN-T networks as well as to studies conducted by SEETO. However, these are taken for granted, rather than thinking in a critical way about using policies and instrument to take advantage of these networks as well as use them as catalysts for economic development or territorial cohesion.

Environment and Water legislation are also in convergence with EU objectives. With regard to water there is a strong reference towards the Water framework directive. However, due to the fact that this directive is already transposed into the Albanian legislation, it is more of a top-down compliance rather than a bottom up learning approach. Meanwhile, protection of the natural areas is also an important factor. Reference is made also to Natura 2000 as well as the European Green Belt Corridor.

Referring to the Integrated Cross Sectorial Coastal Plan, one can say that it is a detailing and extension of the GNTP. The ICSCP makes reference to the Barcelona convention that Albania has joined and adopted all eight of the protocols. In addition, it also makes reference to the principles of Integrated Coastal Zone Management as well as the Ramsar Convention. However, there are no direct references to Marine Spatial Planning which is becoming a key instrument at the European Level. In addition to this, there are no references to the different strategies of the Adriatic-Ionian Macro-region. Not only looking at it from a spatial planning approach, but also in terms of attracting more European funding the fact that these strategies are not taken in consideration can be seen as a weak point. Coastal planning is a new approach in Albania, and by the approach and the methodology defined in the document, it seems that the aim has been to generate something which is in between a spatial plan for land and a coastal management plan. Maybe the lack of experience is a key factor here in the process and the development of a strong methodological approach.

3.2.2 Analysis of the techniques of expressing visions at the national level
The table below shows the results of cartographic representation of GNTP and ICSP Coast. It is obvious that the language used in the expression of the visions of this two plans varies from detailed to abstract. To be more specific:
Europeanization of territorial planning practice in Albania…

**Outline of the territory represented**

In GNTP and ICSP Coast vision map is completely generalized, since in both cases we can obviously see the absence of it by being represented with a white field.

**Geographical positioning of topographic elements**

Only in the case of GNTP the location of these elements is correct. No matter how many of these elements are nested, we can clearly distinguish the exact location of natural areas, water system and agricultural lands. In the case of ICSP Coast, this positioning is much more schematic, to not say that some elements are not represented by any symbol or texture.

**Graphic positioning of boundaries and symbols**

Only in the case of GNTP is very strict, since we can distinguish national and Balkan borders and symbols are also numerous and geographically correct located. The opposite happens with ICSP Coast. Symbols are geographically inaccurate located and very fuzzy.

**Graphic differentiation of point and line symbols**

In both cases is locationally true. Positioning of natural elements, urban or economic, as well as the exact boundaries of the area are in exact location and seem to have been generated from GIS.

Supporting arguments are also shown by the second assessment which analyze the way that the vision is communicated in these plans. Below are the results of the completed tables. The way they are built is by measuring how well or not are the policy statements expressed in the vision maps.

The assessment is conducted on the basis of criteria for the analysis of the ‘graphic structure’ (table 1) discussed above and also by the complexity of cartographic representations (table 1 and 2).

Since EU and especially North European countries are the pioneers of spatial planning and cartographic representation, the impact in the Albanian context can be noticed. As a concept that only in the last years has started to consolidate, spatial planning in Albania is trying to shape based on the most successful systems of planning in Europe, referring to the whole process of policy making and also the visualization part. It can be said that for the moment planning system in Albania is in that phase that is dealing with ‘institutional learning’ of the planning artefacts (visible planning products, structures and processes). Considered as the first step in this difficult process it can be said that is a way of learning but a very superficial and unconsolidated one. The risk is that this phase can last for very long and professionals and planning institution should not allow, hence it needs to be followed up with analysis and discussion, training as well as a process of self-evaluation in order to consolidate the planning culture on context.

Comparison of policy aims in text and graphical expression in spatial planning documents of GNTP and ICSPCoast.

**Table 1.** Level of abstraction of GNTP and ICSP
Table 2 and 3- Comparison of policy aims in text and graphical expression in strategic spatial plans (GNTP and ICSP Coast)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POLICIES AND INSTRUMENTS</th>
<th>GNTP</th>
<th>ICSP</th>
<th>GNTP</th>
<th>ICSP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Development of national indicators</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td>Development of indicators for the Alketa With European Integration</td>
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<td>Education and innovative and economic sector for the Balkans</td>
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<tr>
<td>Access to and competitive economy in the Balkans area</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Development of sustainable infrastructure and renewable energy</td>
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<td>Development of Multi-modal Transport Systems</td>
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<tr>
<td>Equity in access, distribution, accessibility and economic advantages</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intelligent production of urban centers through policies and innovative development</td>
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<td>Intelligent management of natural resources and industrial development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preservation and尊重 the natural areas and scenic heritage</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preservation of natural, historical and cultural heritage</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated planning and development of sustainable transport, food management</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>x REPRESENTED ON VISION MAP</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x DISCUSSED IN POLICY TEXT AND VISION STATEMENT.</td>
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</table>

go through spatial planning processes. This is expressed in particularly in their vision map, the way that policies are expressed is done similarly with European countries. For example, comparing GNTP with Netherland Spatial Plan, there are a lot of similar elements: the division of economic regions, the concept used in GNTP is exactly the same; colors used in the vision map are also similar, the same blue used for water, green for natural system, green dot pattern for protected areas; same symbols for main functions as airports, economic areas, economic regions and also almost the same amount of information used to express the policies in the vision map.

Comparing to Ireland Spatial Plan, the cartographic representation of the regions maps is almost the same: the main urban centers are shown in exactly same way, different colors are used; exactly the same symbols for: national transport corridors (arrow); gateways and hubs (circle with a dot in the middle); distribution of the populations (dots with different colors); proposed
action in potential areas (same actions, different colors).
Regarding to ICSP Coast, there are a lot of similarities with the vision map of Netherland Spatial Plan. The most distinguished element is the pixel module used to describe the land use that is different in both plans but from visual point of view is exactly the same. There are used four colors do describe this uses in both cases and the colors are mostly the same. Other elements are similar too: narrow that express the infrastructure corridors and circle element expressing the urban regions.

Conclusions
The aim of this paper was to analyse the way that different processes of Europeanization impact on a planning culture and planning practice thereof. Through literature review and a theoretical discussion, it was observed that Europeanization has a wide variety of ways in influencing a planning culture, however, for this case learning was seen as the key element in shaping a planning culture, especially due to the circumstances of Albania being only a candidate country. For this purpose, three main aspects of planning were analyzed in the context of learning from EU policies and guidelines as well as processes. However, even in terms of learning a division was made between ‘thin’ and ‘thick’ learning.
What can be noted from the analyses is that Albania has initiated a process of cultural change in spatial planning from a strong tradition of urbanism/urban regulatory planning towards a more spatial approach. However, this is still in the early phases and new processes and practices still needs to settle and consolidate. Important steps have been made in terms of spatial planning legislation, where new processes, instruments and institutions have been introduced resembling a more proactive approach towards spatial planning.
With regard to the newly approved GNTP and ICSP coast, one can conclude that there are definitely signs of Europeanization, albeit at the very first stages. Both plans make strong references of European Document, especially the GNTP which makes a strong connection to ESDP objectives as well as other important sectorial policies/directives. However, due to the embryonic stage in which Albania is currently, as well as due to the fact that this is the first experience in drafting a legislation, one can say that we are only in the phase of referencing and ‘copying’ European objectives into the planning documents. The experience, the influence and the learning process is not such yet to allow for a change in policy processes and further detailing of the European concepts into planning documents in Albania.
Cartographic representations are used to directly express policies. Through their communicative power and clarity, they can contribute more in achieving certain political goals rather than legal and financial instruments. Cartographic representations can help overcome language barriers when discussing policy options. Differences in shape, style and use of cartographic representations in spatial planning is different in different cultures planning. The planning system in Albania is still in the first steps and we can’t say that is consolidated yet. Due to the absence of previous experiences and political system, there isn’t made any progress in the visualization process to express policies of spatial planning. By producing our vision maps, based on good examples of spatial planning visions is obvious that this is only the first step to start such a process, but for sure if it continues in this way is not promising at all. This examples should serve to learn the way how the cartographic representations can be produced but the process of creating a unique language that is understandable for all the actors and that is useful and appropriate in the context of Albania, is a whole new chapter that should be developed if we want to have a successful planning process.

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43. NTPA (2016) General National Territorial Plan of Albania

44. NTPA (2016) Integrated Cross Sectorial Plan for the Coast


