

DEVELOPING NEW SCHEMES FOR THE INTEGRATION OF THE BALKAN SPACE/ENVIRONMENT: FIRST EXPERIENCE FROM THE OSPE PROJECT

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Introduction

Ever since the so-called Brundtland Report was disclosed (1987), the activities aimed at sustainable development have been facing a number of ambiguities. These are of a four-fold nature. Firstly, the very notion of sustainable development carries a theoretical 'tension' between different understandings of sustainability, the most notable being that between ecological sustainability, on the one hand, and economic sustainability, on the other (cf., Common, 1995). Further, as far as there has been a widely accepted notion on the general principles and criteria of sustainability, when these come to be discussed in the political forums and arenas, it becomes obvious that the stances of the societal actors involved may vary considerably as to both the more concrete objectives of sustainable development and the feasible and acceptable means. The conundrum in question has been on the table from the very beginning of the 'narrative' of sustainability, and was even more accentuated at the Rio Conference of 1992 (cf. Grubb et al., 1995). In essence, what may well seem sustainable in a political community with some 20,000 USD per capita GDP, appears to be far beyond the reach of the people 'enjoying' not more than, say, 2,000 USD per capita GDP. Thirdly, the very practical interpretation of sustainability basically depends on pertinent planning/policy information support (OECD, 1995), in at least two meanings. Indeed, any workable concept of sustainability would necessitate corresponding planning/policy information support (cf. Blowers, 1996). On the other hand, the information support is in itself 'formative' for the understanding of the sustainability in question; to a large extent, the way in which one designs the planning/policy information support also determines the contents of the planning and policy concept itself. This particularly applies when developing indicators of sustainable development for various locales (Urbanisticni institut Slovenije, 1999), as well when assessing the so-called carrying capacity and ultimate thresholds of concrete environment (Kozlovsk & Hill, 1993). Finally, any concept of sustainability elaborated and decided upon would also depend, for its implementation upon the institutional and organisational arrangements at hand. In this respect, it often happens that the existing administrative mode of a country or a group thereof is not supportive to the concept chosen, implying that its major restructuring is also needed.

What is of even more relevance here, is the occasion on which such and similar exercises have been undertaken in the past decades (i.e., the 1990s). Namely, as from the end of 1980s the ex-communist/socialist ('transition') countries have been experiencing a new era, with political pluralisation, privatisation, liberalisation and marketisation dominating the scene. Under such circumstances, a number of the so-called 'extra-planning and policy' factors were more influential on the entire issue of sustainability, than were the sustainable issues proper. In particular, the ever-changing role of the state, changing power relations and a new balance between the public and private domain have considerably influenced the entire 'narrative' of sustainability, for which reason they may also be paid specific attention to. The latter, however, pertain not only to the ex-socialist countries, but to the developed countries with market economies as well.

In this paper, the most recent experience from the work on a regional spatio-environmental scheme of sustainable development is reported on. The scheme applies to six Balkan countries, viz., Albania, Bulgaria, FR Yugoslavia, FYR Macedonia, Greece, and Romania, and refers to a project in the field of spatial and environmental planning/policy, which has been carried out throughout the period 1999-2001, i.e., the OSPE (and a parallel Project, the ESTIA). The next part extends the basics about the OSPE. The third part deals with the findings on the spatial and environmental planning/policy systems in the countries in question. In the fourth section the issue of planning/policy information support is discussed in more detail. Next, more insights have been provided regarding the role of state and public interests, respectively, in sustainable development matters. The paper concludes with a number of proposals as to the scope of possible future activities. All the issues discussed focus on the aspects exposed at the beginning of these introductory remarks.

Basic Notions and Activities of the Project OSPE

The OSPE is the acronym for the Observatory for Spatial Planning and Environment. It has been formed in the framework of the DAC/OECD Programme of the Greek Ministry of the Environment, Spatial Planning and Public Works (1999). The OSPE was initiated and has subsequently been co-ordinated by Greece, being the only member-state of the EU among the six counterparts, the other five countries encompassing Albania, Bulgaria, FR Yugoslavia, FYR Macedonia and Romania.

The OSPE has been envisaged as a network of research institutions from the six member-countries listed, with the regional centre and national focal points, the latter coordinating the activities of various actors from the sub-national spatial and environmental planning/policy levels.

The key mission of the OSPE consists of observing, analysing and disseminating the basic spatial and environmental information in the member-countries. Its other three roles comprise related research work, elaborating spatial development documents and communication supportive to the fulfillment of the key mission.

Its rationale stems from the lack of comprehensive and systematised data on spatial and environmental phenomena in the OSPE countries (variable at the national and the national and sub-national levels). On the other hand, given the varying legacies of spatial, economic and environmental planning and policy in the OSPE countries, as well as the newly emerging pan- and regional European schemes in this planning/policy field (including various aid, re-development and reconstruction schemes and programmes), there has been an urge to develop a common approach to collecting, processing and interpreting the most significant basic data and indicators, in order to acquire as clear as possible a picture on the existing situation and future development perspective.

The OSPE has been paralleled by the Project ESTIA (being the acronym of i.e., European Space and Territorial Integration Alternatives: Spatial development strategies and policy integration for the South-east Europe), whose major objectives and work packages have been complementary to and harmonised with those of the OSPE. The five ultimate OSPE/ESTIA deliverables comprised the following documents/projects:

- the Spatial Planning Systems and Agencies in Southeast Europe;
- the OSPE and ESTIA home pages on the Internet;
- the Pilot Spatial Planning Observatory (subsequently consolidated and established as a network of research institutions in the field), also including a number of related schemes of spatial and environmental planning/policy basic data and development indicators;
- the Spatial Planning Priorities in Southeast Europe (being the final ESTIA deliverable);
- a programme on the future co-operation among the counterparts, comprising a number of sets of parallel activities scheduled.

Within the OSPE, vast and comprehensive work has been done so far concerning the collection, processing and mapping of a large number of spatial, environmental and socio-economic basic data

and development indicators. On the basis of an initial blue-print (later modified though), a number of specific tasks were performed in the 1999-2000 period, viz.:¹

- the provisionally available selected data and indicators have subsequently been presented and discussed within a pilot exercise;
- an adjusted list of some 80 indicators of 'state', 'pressure' and 'response' type, grouped into seven classes, was worked on in the UEHR and disseminated to the counterparts in the other five countries, as the basis for collecting and presenting of additional data and indicators;
- the data and indicators obtained were subsequently processed and mapped, resulting in a set of consolidated planning/policy information, as well as in a number of proposals as to future common activities in this field. (The proposals in question strongly rest on a fairly comprehensive assessment of the now available data, as well as on an appraisal of additional information, which could be provided within a reasonable time period and costs.) Although the information has been sought at various planning/policy levels, the emphasis was put on the collection, mapping and interpretation of indicators at the NUTS Level II and NUTS Level III;
- two additional sets of basic data and indicators of a preliminary/tentative character have also been worked out, to be subsequently discussed with the counterparts (all searching for a 'common denominator'), and to predictably support the future formulation and implementation of the OSPE-plus (as well as of the ESTIA-plus) documents on sustainable spatial development at supra-national, national and sub-national planning/policy levels;
- next, an overall planning/policy evaluation scheme has also been worked out, to serve as a general methodological framework for ex ante, ex post and ongoing planning/policy evaluation for the activities in question;
- all the results outlined to have accordingly been summarised in the Final Report, which was submitted to the responsible Greek ministry;
- finally, the results of the Project were presented, along side with other 21 Greek DAC/OECD projects, at the International Conference 'Balkans, Black Sea, S.E. Mediterranean, Caspian Sea, Environment, Spatial Planning, Sustainable Development', held in Athens on 27th January 2001.

The general idea within the two co-projects has been the seeking and promotion of sustainable development, as a central development theme/option applied in the OSPE region and elsewhere in Europe and at a global level. Its pillars are: environmental quality; social justice; and competitiveness of the local/regional, national and supra-national productive systems. As de-aggregated, its key aims and objectives are (emulating the correspondent pan-European categories):

- economic and social cohesion;
- spatial integration (especially of the internal cross-border areas and external zones of co-operation);
- sustainable development;
- competitiveness of the productive systems;

¹ The Projects OSPE and ESTIA have been carried out in a number of parallel exercises. As from the autumn of 1998, four large meetings have taken place with all counterparts, i.e., in Thessaloniki (October 1998), Sofia (March 1999), Bucharest (September 1999) and Thessaloniki (March/April 2000), followed by consecutive proceedings and other related volumes. The two projects were co-ordinated by Professor G. Kafkalas of Spatial Development Research Unit, Department of Urban and Regional Development and Planning, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (in the sequel: SDRU), and Professor P. Getimis, of the Institute of Urban Environment and Human Resources, Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences, Athens (in the sequel: UEHR). Some 50 spatial and urban planners, environmental planners, economists and other experts from all six countries, as well as from a number of other than OSPE/ESTIA countries, have been contributing on all the themes, issues and topics indicated above, as well as some other issues (e.g., future economic development and integration in the Balkan region, historical and current cultural patterns in the broader area, problems of European integration and enlargement, theoretical and general problems of planning in the transition period, new institutional and organisational arrangements in the transition period, problems of peripherality in development, protection of natural and cultural heritage, etc.), to result in more than 70 particular essays and other contributions. Within the member-countries, the leading research institutions in the spatial and environmental field took on co-ordinating the research and other activities within the respective national realms.

- equality of access to infrastructure, knowledge and innovation (development of harmonised basic infrastructure networks);
- balanced development of urban systems and rural areas (space);
- protection, conservation and promotion of the natural and cultural environment/heritage.

In effect, it transpired that the OSPE/ESTIA exercise has been among a small number of European-regional scheme so far, in which a more operationalised concept of sustainable development has been elaborated, supported by a concomitant planning/policy information scheme. To that end, the corresponding European documents of the kind (i.e., ESDP, EESCSA, etc.) have been emulated and further developed, to care for the substance of sustainable development which is more regionally relevant.

There has also been another moment which strongly influenced the research, done both within the OSPE, albeit more “in the air”, than explicitly formulated, i.e., to exert a positive influence on the entire political culture of the region regarding the spatial and environmental complex. Namely, the majority of the individual experts engaged are spatial/urban and environmental planners, otherwise fairly frustrated by a widespread disregard for spatial and environmental dimension of development in their respective countries (especially in the domain of economic development). However, it should be noticed that his particular task, i.e., awareness-raising of spatial and environmental strands of the transformation and development process in the transition process, especially concerning the decision-makers in the OSPE countries, seems to be at the very beginning of its realisation.

However, it has been demonstrated from the very beginning of the two Projects that both the existing planning/policy systems and practices in the OSPE member-countries, and the available planning/policy information support, pose the ultimate institutional and organisation threshold for envisaged future co-operation. This moment proved of even more relevance in the context of their ‘geography lost and found’, i.e., under the circumstances where this has been the first project of the kind for the countries involved for many decades now. Apart from that, the changing pattern of the dominant power structure, as well as the broadly disputed role of the state, have also heavily influenced the workings of the planning/policy system and, in turn, these issues are discussed in more detail in the next three chapters.

Review and Assessment of the hitherto Collected, Processed and Mapped Information on Sustainable Development Planning/Policy

A considerable amount of information (i.e., basic data, indicators and synthetic measures) that has been amassed represents an impressive achievement in the existing context where, with the exception of Greece, the other five OSPE members belong to ex-socialist/communist countries, where availability and comparability of planning/policy data has always been a serious and difficult problem to overcome. As a result, the initially collected information contributed to a much better understanding of a number of spatial, environmental and socioeconomic development patterns, trends and problems in the region in question. It is particularly important to understand this, since, as already pointed to, it is also the first activity of the kind among the OSPE countries. However, this fairly comprehensive knowledge base resulted from an *ad hoc* statistical action, which tends to narrow down the scope and volume of the information obtained. In the future, a more structured, continual and systematic approach would be needed, which could be implemented only by means of a series of programmed and continuous statistical activities, or, in other words, by the planning/policy information support proper. Thus, here a short review and assessment of the hitherto collected information is presented, then followed by a proposal as to how to continue with a more ambitious exercise in the future (in the Concluding Remarks).²

² Based on: Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Public Works (2000), as well as on the related research papers (mimeo) of the Institute of Urban Environment and Human Resources, Panteion University of Athens.

In terms of their quantity and quality ('utility'), the data/indicators collected and processed vary considerably among the OSPE countries. Bulgaria and Greece provided the best data/indicators, followed by Romania. The data for Albania, FR Yugoslavia and FYR Macedonia lag far behind the first three countries. However, even in the case of Bulgaria, Greece and Romania, the hitherto collected and processed data/indicators do not suffice for formulating comprehensive and implementation-oriented spatial and environmental planning/policy documents, and especially so for the documents to be worked out at the sub-national planning/policy levels. The insufficiencies indicated here have mainly to do with the following:

- firstly, for all countries (with the exception of Romania, though partially even in this case), the majority of data/indicators have not been available for the NUTS Level III, indicating that the formulating of more ambitious planning/policy objectives at the sub-regional levels would not be possible at this point of time without additional data/indicators;
- secondly, the basic scheme of indicators should be further modified as well, to match the planning/policy aims that have subsequently been formulated within the OSPE, especially those pertaining to the issues of competitiveness, integration and cohesion;
- even in the case of the NUTS Level II, where more data happened to be available, they have not covered many specific issues, apart from the fact that they are, for some countries (e.g., FR Yugoslavia), apparently as scarce as those of the NUTS Level III;
- finally, as the data/indicators so far collected are extremely heterogeneous in respect to their historical coverage, even a simple though rigorous statistical analysis of the majority of planning/policy issues for the entire OSPE/ESTIA area does not seem viable.

In summary, in all countries there has been enormous progress with regard to the planning/policy information support in spatial, urban and environmental planning, and in particular regarding the use of the GIS-related methods. On the other hand, the available planning knowledge base is overly insufficient, as they are still missing some of its key segments, viz.:

- the pace at which the national statistical systems are being 'greened' is slow.
- more work is needed on elaborating appropriate systems of sustainable development information, notably, of the sets of indicators that mirror the problems, interests and aspirations of a concrete planning/policy community.
- there is a sheer lack of knowledge on the absorbing (assimilative, carrying, etc) spatial capacity and ultimate/critical thresholds, which hinders the preparation of the more concrete conceptions of sustainable development.
- expertise and political deliberations still dominates over other sorts of knowledge that is necessary for democratic and implementable development schemes. Specifically, the so-called 'layman knowledge' is missing in many *ex ante* deliberations on alternative future development paths. This coincides with the inclination of many planners and other experts to indulge themselves primarily in the technical aspects of planning and policy, thereby neglecting the communicative and collaborative strands of the whole exercise.

National Spatial Planning/Policy Systems and Practices in the OSPE Countries: A Short Comparison

All six countries share a number of common traits as regards development planning and policy system and practice, although each of them shelters a number of its specific idiosyncrasies. In summary, there is a general trend to modernise, decentralise and democratise both planning legislation and practice, so that they can be brought into comfort with the emerging practices in the EU. Having previously undertaken a number of administrative reforms in this field, they have recently ambitiously stipulated the preparation of ramified sets of spatial and urban plans and other strategic schemes at national, intermediate and local/municipal levels. Some of the relevant documents have already been worked out or are at least under preparation. However, only Montenegro and Serbia (i.e., the two constitutive federal parts of FR Yugoslavia) had their respective national spatial plans approved earlier, and in

FYR Macedonia its plan is ready for public perusal now. In the other three countries, although many research projects and a number of sectoral schemes had been worked out earlier, more recent, widely approved strategic documents are not available. Whatever the specific case in a particular country, however, it seems that the majority of the existing development documents would have to be re-worked, to cope with the changed circumstances and the emerging development planning and policy trends on the international scene. In summary, so far there has been no document in the countries in question which has succeeded in developing a more concretised notion of spatio-environmental order.³

Albeit variable concerning the start-up and intensity, the five ex-communist/socialist countries (ESCs) of the OSPE region have embarked upon the difficult task of departing from the GOSPLAN-like development planning and policy systems and practices inherited from the previous period (i.e., 'directive', 'dirigiste', and similar). The 'asymptotic ideal' is to devise a development planning and policy system that would suit a plural political society, which is more based on market decisions (i.e., 'indicative', 'stimulative/destimulative', and similar). However, the former planning/policy systems have been dismantled, yet the new ones are still in their infancy, as the changes have been introduced slowly and in an erratic way. The legacy of the former ideological, political and economic systems in these countries has proved very difficult to remove and substitute with new institutional forms in a short time period, implying that radical changes appear to be accessible over a number of years only. Two countries (Bulgaria and Romania) have, as of recently, been implementing a number of measures necessary for accession to the EU. Another three countries, i.e., Albania, FYROM and FR Yugoslavia, still face the critical inaccessibility to more definite answers on the inclusion/exclusion propositions (i.e., the unspecified relationships to the EU integration and enlargement process).

Although specific in its own right, the case of Greece is somewhat analogous to that of the ESCs. Thus far, Greece has also been experiencing a kind of transition, i.e., a departure from the traditional planning and policy style (i.e., predominantly regulative) to the patterns, which, have as of recently, been emerging in the EU.

In more detail, similarities and differences are as follows:

- all six countries share a lack of sound theoretical and general methodological background of 'development planning and policy in transition'. Apart from serving as a broad guideline, the most recent expert and political mantra of sustainability has not resulted in the more elaborated and concrete development paradigms ('development metaphors') so far. Consequently, there has been an eclectic body of varied theoretical doctrines which nourishes different development endeavours;⁴
- there has been an impression of an overall anti-planning stance in the ESCs, as the mainstream opinions in the political and expert circles are still preoccupied by the leading role of neo-liberal macroeconomic policy versus all other types of societal interventions in the public realm. Such a trend is partly understandable in the context of the past experience with planning in the ESCs, yet it should also be acknowledged that short and mid term macroeconomic policy may not be the substitute for a more ambitious strategic development policy proper. This is more than the mere issue of sequencing the reform steps, as social, economic and environmental development is also needed in these countries as from the very beginning of post-socialist transition, to parallel the reforms under way. Particularly, the system of socioeconomic planning/policy was dismantled and consequent practice collapsed in all the OSPE countries (with the exception of Greece), not to be substituted as yet by a new planning practice of the 'market' era. At the practical level, one may

³ This is, for example, the case with the Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia (1997), in which a number of various elements pertaining to the general notion of sustainability have been paid attention to, yet no more concretised conception of the kind was elaborated.

⁴ Interestingly enough, even in the ISoCaRP Millennium Report (2000), otherwise dealing extensively with the future prospects of planning, there is no mention whatsoever of this problem, specific to the countries of the post-communist/socialist transition! Similarly, there has been almost no mention of this problem in the majority of the most recent deliberations, as it has been taken for granted that no major event might happen in the transition period, as compared to the latest experience of the more developed European countries (cf., Balchin et al., 1999).

easily recognise a somewhat 'eclectic' approach, as the majority of development planning/policy documents that have been prepared in the 1990s seem to have been serving many various mission (though legitimate too), other than the development planning policy 'proper' use to do (e.g., back-covering for private appropriation of public goods, countering criticisms, mere monitoring of changes, establishing arenas for debate, etc.).⁵ To that extent, it may well be ascertained that many forms of the so-called 'pseudo-planning/policy' or 'quasi-planning/policy' dominate the development scene in the countries in question;

- in all countries, the legacy of fairly centralised and hierarchical development planning is still strong. The moves to a more decentralised, democratised and bottom-up approach have not fruited so far in radical changes to that end. For its part, FR Yugoslavia appears to have lost almost all its 'social memory and learning' of the even over-participative system of planning from the period of 'socialist self-management', as the institutional reforms undertaken at the beginning of 1990s removed almost its entire legacy of the kind;
- another long-standing characteristic of development planning/policy exerts a strong influence on the current practices, namely, a 'compartmentalisation' between socioeconomic policy, regional economic planning, spatial/urban planning and environmental policy. The recent attempts to integrate more economic, environmental and sectoral aspects under the umbrella of spatial and urban planning do not seem to have succeeded. This appears to have resulted from both the well-entrenched sectoral interests and the supremacy role ascribed to macroeconomic policy and economic planning relative to other policy fields. Another drawback has to do with the still prevailing parochial views in the four spheres, i.e., that of 'economism' in macroeconomic policy, 'regionalism' in regional economic planning, 'ecologism' in environmental policy, and 'physicalism' in spatial and urban planning;
- in terms of general methodology and applied methodology and planning/policy evaluation, the *ex ante* evaluation is far more practised in the fields of spatial and urban planning and environmental policy, as compared to the *ex post* and ongoing planning/policy evaluation. On the other hand, the rigour applied in the *ex ante* assessments often does not appear to be high. On the contrary, development options are seldom examined via a number of veritable alternative scenarios. Similarly, usually sectoral and social implications of development alternatives are not fully evaluated in the majority of spatial and urban planning/policy exercises. In short, the standard economic CBA (Cost Benefit Analysis) is seldom coupled with the SCBA (Social Cost Benefit Analysis), or with the SEA (Strategic Environment Assessment);
- in all six countries, implementation still figures as the weakest segment of the entire planning/policy machinery and practice. Answers to 'what', 'where' and 'when' dominate over all other key questions in spatial, urban and environmental planning/policy, especially over those of 'how', 'who', 'at which costs' and 'by means of which planning/policy support', let alone over that of 'why'. Spatial and urban planners still tend to produce various 'visions', even 'utopias'/'dystopias' and 'phantasmagories', rather than to focus on workable and implementable development schemes;
- there is another trait, which is common to planning and policy systems in all six countries. Namely, development projects and programmes are not found to be well-integrated in broader planning and policy schemes. Often, they stay apart from the mainstream planning exercises, both in institutional and methodological terms. On the other hand, large projects and programmes ('strategies unto themselves'), being often of an insuperable significance, tend to avoid the standard development and policy routines stipulated in the planning laws and by-laws;
- as for the development research funding, Greece represents the only exception to the overall pattern of the grossly insufficient resources directed to this and related purposes. The situation in Bulgaria and Romania also seems to have slightly improved in recent years, since the support from some EU sources was made more accessible;
- finally, it should also be emphasised that there is a particular shortage of knowledge on the procedural aspects of development planning and policy in almost all six countries. With, perhaps, the slight exception of Greece, the planners and other experts in the planning/policy field are, on

⁵ In this respect, the situation in all OSPE countries seems to support a well-known finding explicated by Sillince (1986) on various roles that may be assumed by a single planning/policy document.

balance, neither sufficiently educated nor well experienced in planning under the circumstances of a plural political society of multi-stake holders and the predominantly market-based decision making. At the same time, many spatial planners tend to continue practising the so-called 'comprehensive' ('synoptic', etc) planning approaches, to the detriment of the key problems and interests of the planning/policy community in practice.

The Role(s) of the State the New Balance between the Individual/Private and Public Interests

As has almost always been the case in the ESTIA/OSPE countries, the influence of the so-called 'extra-planning/policy factors' is much stronger than that of the planning/policy factors proper. Especially as many of planning/policy powers stem from the state; consequently, the state's role(s) disputed also implies the planning/policy role(s) disputed. Namely, at the beginning of the post-socialist/communist transition period, many hopes were directed towards a new state. No doubt the socialist/communist state was seen to be dismantled, and, in the wake of overall deregulation, more market-based decisions were sought for. At the same time and for obvious reasons, however, there was a strong conviction among many experts and politician about an urge to also develop appropriate institutional arrangements to approximate a 'post-communist/socialist welfare state', at least as an 'asymptotic ideal' to tend towards. Contrary to such early expectations, ten years later, under the circumstances of a deep overall crisis, people face many problems concerning the existing, eminently pre-modern and authoritarian, state. In effect, such an institutional 'entity' represents an apart and retrogressed assemblage of disparate elements from various historical models known, viz. (cf. Block, 1994):⁶

- the public goods state;
- the macroeconomic stabilisation state;
- the development state;
- the social rights state;
- the socialist/communist state;
- the state of early/initial post-communist/socialist 'capitalist accumulation'.

In addition to the roles listed, in many other OSPE countries (notably in the case of FR Yugoslavia), the model of 'warfare state' has also played a very prominent role until very recently.

As for Greece, this country has itself been experiencing a transition from one of the standard models of the welfare state, towards a post-welfarist mode of functioning, thereby sharing a trait that is common to all countries of the European Union (cf. Esping-Anderson, 1994). However, all OSPE countries have, in a sense, embarked upon a process that has been labeled as 'the search for new orientations' in the institutional design of state in post-communist societies (cf. Elster et al., 1998).

As far as the broader political and economic context of development planning/policy appears to be non-transparent, the underlying power structure tends to influence the planning and policy scene in an unpredictable way. This applies more so, the more often force, manipulation, illegitimate authority and paternalism/clientelism assume the leading role in planning and policy deliberations, relative to persuasion and other more democratic and/or acceptable forms of power. It also parallels the widely disputed role of the 'post-communist/socialist' state. Particulars of such a pattern are displayed in more details in what follows. Both as a legacy of the former ideological and political system (i), and as a result of the events in the first phase of the transition period (ii), the power structure that underlies the planning practice is grossly inappropriate from the standpoint of the mid and long term goals of the

⁶ For the self-evident reasons, this would not, in large part, apply to the case of Greece, as it does not share with the other OSPE countries their common Leninist political, ideological, institutional and economic legacy. Of course, this applies to a lesser extent to Greece, as compared to other five countries.

post-communist/socialist transformation of society. Specifically, in planning, it assumes only one of the facets mirroring the power structure pattern that dominates the entire political scene (Vujosevic et al., 2000):

- a general pattern of the so-called 're-active and coercive' power ('power over') dominates in the society at large. In many respects, this pattern is not compatible with the development of a democratic/pluralist, and predominantly market- and private property-based society. Its specific manifestations are:
- use of force (though more psychic than physical);
- the prevalence of 'poor' forms of authority (i.e., coercive authority, false authority, etc.);
- all-pervasive manipulation on the part of the regime, as well as on the part of some other political actors;
- widely practised paternalism and clientelism in the (re)distribution of practically all scarce resources;
- in addition to these, there has also been a wide-spread disregard of the law, practised at large by many organisations, institutions and citizens.⁷

To some point, the existing situation has resulted from the mere fact that the majority of the formerly non-disputable public interests (an 'unspecified client') in the ESCs had been eroded or completely collapsed in the 1990s, leaving the public domain without benchmarks for undertaking activities of unambiguously common importance. As a consequence, many planners have overtly switched to an open 'partisanship' in deliberating and making public policy. In a sense, this contrasts with a legacy of the former political and ideological system, within which the so-called 'social ownership', the key legitimisation base of ('socialist') public interests, took supremacy over all other forms of property. Whatever the general case, however, almost all former socialist/communist public interests have obviously collapsed at the very beginning of the new era, thereby disturbing the broader social, political and economic legitimising base of planning policy, as well as its ethical foundations and value background. At the same time, an enormous number of new legitimate individual interest came to the surface (some of which were previously hidden for various, mostly political and ideological reasons), and many of them have been competing for the status of new public interest(s). Thus, the basis dilemma appeared, as to which interests really do represent public purposes, condensed in the key question: partial or general? Concerning this, one may well notice that the 'fight' is not over by any means, and that 'public interests' appear under many various names, e.g.:

- as 'general public opinion';
- as a 'sum' of the most numerous interests at some point of time;
- as an amorphous 'bundle' of current particular compromises;
- as the interests of the most vociferous and/or powerful and/or 'would-be-winners';
- as veritable interests of the overwhelming majority of actors, acceptable to 'all';
- as potential interests of the disadvantaged/disempowered/deprived (now prevailingly apathetic and dormant public).

Conclusions

To sum up, many improvements are needed in each of the directions indicated here. Fortunately, the recent positive experience within the Project OSPE unequivocally points to the fact that a common denominator to that end seems well accessible. However, as many theoretical, institutional and general and specific methodological issues are still under-researched, it would seem advisable to first examine these and related aspects, for example, within a specific research project. They should thus comprise a number of key general and specific issues, in turn:

- a new 'societal contract' on development planning/policy, and the political and experts forums supportive to it;
- developing a new, 'post-communist/socialist welfare state', in balance with newly emerging private-public partnerships. As the new theory of development planning/policy does not seem

conceivable in a short time period, its 'proxy/simile' might be elaborated, i.e., a number of sound heuristic devices upon which the modernisation of the OSPE countries could be based;

- developing more appropriate power relations, centred at: general orientation towards the so-called 'co/pro-active power' ('power with'); the use of a non-manipulative persuasion as a dominant pattern; 'good' forms of authority; and broadened and improved use of the knowledge base needed to support the democratic development planning/policy;
- theoretical and methodological aspects of planning and policy in the transition period;
- new institutional and organisational arrangements;
- problems of 'division of work' between planning/policy, market and other mechanisms and instruments of societal guidance and control;
- problems of vertical co-ordination (i.e., centralisation/decentralisation), horizontal co-ordination (i.e., between the planning/policy fields and sectors) and other co-ordination (i.e., between the actors from various levels and fields/sectors);
- planning/policy evaluation;
- 'visioning-versus-implementing' problem;
- planning/policy information support (i.e., planning/policy knowledge base);
- content and format of the new generation of development documents at supra-national, national and sub-national levels;
- particularly applying to the ESCs, 'education for Europe', so that adapting to the *acquis communautaire* can be performed more easily and over a reasonable time period;
- there is another matter, which ought to be taken care of, namely, that of the now grossly out-dated existing documents of spatial and environmental policy in all OSPE/ESTIA countries (with the slight exception of Greece). In effect, these documents (i.e., plans, policies and other equivalent arrangements) were designed years ago based on the then recognised problems, the latter seemed to have changed subsequently. Consequently, an entirely new 'generation' of new documents would be needed, and based on the more recent diagnosis worked out.

It should be emphasised once more that all the planning/policy information schemes invented and data/indicators collected and processed so far within the OSPE ought to be understood as of tentative and/or provisional status and value only. Whether their improvement is undertaken or not in the near future, they have yet to be thoroughly discussed and subsequently approved, both in terms of expertise and in terms of political backing for planning/policy uses in the OSPE member-countries. In the future, more systematic and comprehensive statistical exercises would be needed, to cope in parallel with the emerging new theoretical and general methodological trends within the Project and its 'neighbourhoods', as well as with various development initiatives yet to appear. It goes almost without saying that this will be made possible as soon as the OSPE/ESTIA-plus network is established and following fixed institutional and organisational arrangements. In summary, a major improvement of the existing OSPE data/indicators is not to be expected before the national censuses are completed and processed, i.e., in the years 2001-2. However, provided there is a common understanding among the OSPE partners to proceed in a proper way, it seems that modest additional efforts could still improve on the current planning/policy information support even before then. Such an effort would have to encompass a number of *ad hoc* statistical activities (e.g., additional collecting of the apparently existing information, undertaking interviews on specific topics, working out estimates based on samples, etc.). As for the individual member-countries, the main course of action would have to reflect an effort to remove the insufficiencies of the existing base within a reasonable time period and at reasonable costs.

A number of other important though more specific conclusions, could also be drawn from the past experience within the Projects OSPE, which should be taken account of in the future co-operation:

- firstly, it seems as if it is not that important to supply the information for all NUTS Levels in the case of each and every OSPE country. Namely, a rigorous streamlining of the planning/policy information support in accord with the conventional European pattern would be fairly cumbersome to accomplish in some cases, and not easy to recommend vis-à-vis the implied costs

and other disposable resources. At least in the respective cases of Albania, FYR Macedonia and Montenegro (all being small countries/states), a more flexible approach might seem appropriate. Namely, instead of establishing all tiers at the sub-national level, a three-tier administrative structure might prove equally functional (let alone much cheaper), to encompass: (a) the national center; (b) an appropriate 'soft' mode of coordination and harmonisation of planning/policy decisions at the regional level; (c) a fairly decentralised system of local authorities. Such an administrative arrangement would be easier to support in terms of planning/policy information, as compared to the fully developed system;

- secondly, there is a sheer necessity to provide a reliable and 'definite' answer as to the availability of every particular data/indicator at various administrative levels in the OSPE member-countries, implying that a re-assessment of the so far worked out findings should be undertaken as promptly as possible by the counterparts;
- thirdly, continuation of the OSPE-plus activities is imaginable in at least two alternative directions. Preferably, additional collection of indicators should be undertaken, in the first place for Montenegro (i.e., a federal state of FR Yugoslavia) and Greece, but also as for other countries. Should it happen that an overall (i.e., 'across the board') improvement is not possible, then the actors would have to concentrate on a selected number of issues, and perform appropriate *ad hoc* statistical actions. This is only to reiterate the importance of focusing on the priority areas, which have already been repeatedly pointed to. In any case, as the national statistical censuses are pending in almost all OSPE countries, the counterparts should proceed in a way to co-opt the responsible statistical services and provide them with the demands reflecting the needs of OSPE-plus;
- it could happen that some data, which have not so far been sought for, in some member-countries, might well be available. This issue would necessitate a separate consideration among the counterparts;
- the past experience seems to lead to the conclusion that all the OSPE member-countries have not yet developed the preconditions needed for a more ambitious ('across the board') research and cooperation. Should such an impression prove true, this would once more emphasise the need to concentrate on the particular priority areas of mutual interest and cooperation. (To note, some 15 areas of the kind have been listed as eligible in the OSPE Final Report, Executive Summary, pp. 13-14.) As past experience has convincingly demonstrated, having past many critical thresholds, the OSPE counterparts are capable of extending and accomplishing aspirations other than the initial 'barest minimum' of common purposes. To that end, it is the role of UEHR and SDRU to instigate a more demanding involvement of all other actors;
- particularly, two very important classes of indicators, i.e., that on the carrying spatio-ecological ('environmental') capacity and ultimate thresholds are completely missing in the existing evidence, and that on 'greening' the SNAs, which implies that a series of additional research exercises would be needed to compensate for this specific insufficiency. Albeit this could not be accomplished in the near future, it is advisable to start the preparatory activities as soon as feasible.
- there also exists a sheer necessity to transcend the scope of the current activities to the political forums and to the so-called 'third sector' of the member-countries. So far, the actions have been narrowed more to the professional planning/policy audience (with the modest exception of Greece). Therefore, clarifying the information issues is likely to assist in delimiting the range of possibilities in this field. Such an approach seems to be the only way to embark in due time upon the preparation of a number of development documents at various planning/policy levels. Here, envisioning the needed planning/policy information support is of particular importance, as this seems to be among a very small number of ways through which the intentions of various actors can be made 'readable' by all interested parties. In particular, the consensus on the content of the final 'products' of the entire exercise will be easier to reach by specifying in advance the range of information available for alternative options;
- finally, while there is nothing wrong with the intention of the majority of spatial planners within the OSPE to develop both ecologically and socio-economically orientated spatial (and urban) planning, there still exists an open question as to whether the actors from the adjacent fields (e.g.,

the mainstream economists and environmentalists, the actors in some key sectors such as energy, transportation, etc.) will accept the subsuming of the key propositions of socioeconomic and environmental policy under the umbrella of spatial planning. Namely, while there is a vivid need to assist the activities directed at awareness-raising for the spatio-ecological strands of development (which is grossly neglected in what is now dominating under the name of 'socioeconomic' policy in all ex-communist/socialist countries, as well as to a large extent in Greece), at the same time such an aspiration should not be 'overdone', to the extent undermine the key aspirations, stakes and interests of the 'neighbours'. There seems to exist an appropriate approach to minimise such a risk, i.e., to work out as clearly as possible the key expected social, economic and sectoral implications of the proposed spatial/urban and environmental aims (goals, objectives, etc;

- to conclude, it should also be clearly understood that the results of the OSPE (along side with the ESTIA and other spatial and environmental documents) are predictably to serve as one of the 'umbrella projects' for many other development and modernisation exercises in the region, which will very seldom be directly linked to the spatial development and environmental protection proper. In that respect, the relevance of spatial and environmental 'thinking' in other spheres ought not to be overestimated, since there has been, for a long time, a tendency in the entire region towards a lack of a more ecologically controlled development and spatial order and organisation. On the other hand, this may, perhaps, stimulate spatial and environmental planners, the 'framers' of a new spatio-ecological order in this part of Europe, to work more on the non-spatial and non-ecological strands of their proposals ('visions').

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