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Redefining Territorial Scales and the Strategic Role of Spatial Planning

Evidence from Denmark and Catalonia

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Abstract: This paper argues that spatial planning systems tend to redefine and reinterpret conventional territorial scales through the dual adoption and articulation of legal instruments and spatial strategies at different levels of planning administration. In depicting such redefinition, this paper delves into the cases of Denmark and Catalonia through an analysis concerned with: i) the strategic spatial role attributed to each level of planning; and ii) the redefinition of territorial scales as a result of changing political objectives and spatial relationships occurring between planning levels. The assessment pertaining to the strategic roles of spatial planning instruments as well as the evolving redefinition of territorial scales in both Denmark and Catalonia suggests that the conventional, hierarchical 'cascade-shaped' ideal of policy implementation is superseded. While both cases tend to converge in their alignment with strategic spatial planning, the implications stemming from rescaling processes radically diverge, as illustrated by the opposing fates of the regional scale and the distinctive means to reassure a 'vertical spatial anchor' for the stability and permanence of power structures.

1 Introduction

Territorial scales typically experience continuous transformation processes and tensions occurring between dynamics of territorial stabilization and destabilization (Herod 2011). Scales and scalar arrangements are fluid and procedural, but they can also be routinized into relatively enduring and hegemonic structures for certain periods of time (Foucault 2004). As these processes turn out to be only temporarily (not inherently) associated with a particular scale, each scalar configuration is thereby continually reproduced through a political project, such as spatial planning (Marston et al. 2005). In their attempt to influence and shape spatial development processes, the roles of spatial planning systems in western Europe tend to become increasingly differentiated. Nested

hierarchies (i.e. urban, municipal, regional and national), which commonly portray discrete, permanent and fixed scales of conventional planning systems, increasingly contradict ongoing processes of spatial and historical transformations. Hence, the dynamics of territorial integration constantly urge us to reconsider the spatial mismatch between the boundaries of administrative jurisdictions and the rather fluid territories of functional regions (Harvey 1989; Keating 1997).

Much of the reflections on the debate over 'scale' have concerns about the uneven development of capitalism over space. To explain the channelling of capital contradictions, Harvey (2000) refers to the usefulness of the scale as a reference or 'spatial anchor' for the reproduction of capital. At the same time, he also alludes to the notion of 'structural coherence' as far as the self-frantic movement of capital is concerned (Harvey 2005). A significant attribute concerning these two concepts is that they draw attention to the constant dynamic in which capital moves: between mobility and attachment, where the temporary equilibrium around a specific territorial form is just a trend or a target. Along these lines, Swyngedouw (1997) suggests that the scale represents exactly this temporary socio-spatial engagement that channels and contains the conflict. This is perhaps the conceptual basis of the idea of scale where further discussion begins. Can it be considered that the contradictions of public policies need 'spatial anchoring' and 'structural coherence' for their functioning? If so, scale in spatial planning would refer to the geographic area in which certain coherence and fixing processes of public policy occur at any given time.

To understand rescaling implications, as well as the increasing differentiation of spatial planning roles across administrative levels in western European nation-states, there is a continued need to inspect the grounds and motivations behind the evolving conceptions of scale and representations of space portrayed in diverse spatial plans and strategies put forward at different levels of planning administration. How are fixed planning systems, based on con-

ventional territorial scales, instrumentally re-interpreted to cope with current territorial dynamics through innovative state strategies? In contributing to the ongoing debate concerning contemporary rescaling processes, this paper delves into the cases of Denmark and Catalonia, focusing on the redefinition of territorial scales that emerges from shifting roles of spatial planning policies and practices within and across different levels of planning administration.

In Denmark, spatial planning has been exposed to significant reorientations over the course of the past two decades (Galland 2012a, 2012b; Galland, Enemark 2013, 2015). Danish spatial planning has historically had a 'comprehensive-integrated' character, an appeal attributed to 'mature' planning systems, policies and institutions seeking to achieve territorial synchronization (CEC 1997). In 2007, however, the former liberal-conservative coalition government (2001–2011) implemented a reform of local government structure that transformed the political geography of Denmark and its existing intergovernmental arrangements. The Danish planning system has consequently undergone a series of radical shifts over the past few years, most notably reflected in the rescaling as well as the changing roles of policy institutions and policy instruments at all administrative levels. In synthesis, this whole situation has essentially led to: i) the downward rescaling (from regional to municipal levels) of most functions and responsibilities related to spatial planning; ii) the upward rescaling (from metropolitan to national level) of spatial planning functions associated with the Greater Copenhagen region; and iii) the revocation of regional planning as well as the institutional dismantling of the metropolitan level.

Belonging to the 'urbanism tradition' of spatial planning systems and policies (CEC 1997), Catalonia has a remarkable historical background in supra-local planning, particularly as regards Barcelona and its hinterland, despite the fact that only one metropolitan plan (i.e. Metropolitan General Plan of 1976) has been formally approved and has legally binding status. Since the end of the Spanish dictatorship in 1977, the autonomous government of Catalonia [*Generalitat de Catalunya*] advanced innovative municipal urban planning policies and practices as a means for democratic vindication to face inherited social deficits (Ferrer, Sabaté 1999). However, during twenty years of conservative government, supra-local planning remained distant from societal demands. In 2003, the victory of the Socialist Party in Cata-

lonia's general election reaffirmed a new confidence in supra-local planning. For the purpose of achieving territorial re-equilibrium, Catalonia's government implemented the level of the Catalan regions [*veguerias*] as a framework for developing a 'national' planning model. Coherent with the tradition of urbanism, Catalan regional plans rely on physical design principles. However, due to the policy inaccuracy of these plans at the local scale, complex urban and metropolitan areas have been developed through Supra Local Urban Plans (SLUPs). SLUPs can be viewed as a 'spatial linkage' between the regional and the local scale, tying together the historical fragmentation of a legal framework that dissociates regional planning from urbanism.

The selection of the two cases explored in this paper is based on three typological conditions: i) a demographic condition, as both Denmark and Catalonia have similar demographic characteristics and surface areas. Moreover, both cases have a conflictive top-heaviness exerted by their metropolitan capitals, Copenhagen (circa 2 million inhabitants, over one-third of the total population of Denmark) and Barcelona (3.2 million inhabitants, half of the total population of Catalonia); ii) a legislative condition, as both cases are characteristic of planning systems with at least three operative levels: local, regional and national (in the case of Catalonia the 'autonomous community' level is considered a historical 'nationality'); iii) a planning practice or style condition: despite the fact that Denmark and Catalonia are commonly associated with different planning traditions (CEC 1997; Farinós-Das 2006), the evolution of spatial planning in Catalonia since the early 2000s suggests an explicit trend towards the comprehensive-integrated tradition, which has historically characterized Danish spatial planning. On top of the quantitative and qualitative similarities that make these specific cases akin, the actual comparison of two different units of analysis – a national state and an autonomous region – adds value to the research problem, showing the ambiguity of judicial boundaries vis-à-vis the process of rescaling (driven by state spatial strategies). In particular, the contrast between the cases highlights the 'administrative lightness' (Meijsmans 2010) of national and sub-national levels in terms of spatial strategies (Balducci et al. 2011).

This paper builds on the analysis of plans and policies prepared at different levels of planning administration in Denmark and Catalonia over the past two decades. The examination

of policy documents includes national and regional planning reports, metropolitan spatial plans and urban plans and strategies, amongst others. Such analyses have been supplemented by semi-structured interviews conducted with key policymakers and planning actors who have been involved in plan and strategy-making processes. In terms of methods, the article attempts to combine the analysis of primary sources (documentation of plans) and secondary sources (technical reports, outreach and scientific articles that make up the theoretical framework). The analysis of the cases is primarily based on an interpretive approach that combines theoretical concepts, policy outputs and interview results.

Following this introduction, the paper is subdivided in four sections and a conclusion. First, the paper presents a theoretical overview that addresses the strategic roles of planning and the treatment of scale from alternative spatial development perspectives based on the transition from physical, land-use planning to strategic spatial planning. Second, the paper provides a descriptive and comparative overview of planning systems in Denmark and Catalonia while covering their legalistic traditions, principles and objectives, as well as their most recent reorientations. The paper then moves on to examine the strategic roles of planning instruments and their linkage across levels of government. Based on this assessment, the paper finally develops an interpretation concerning the redefinition of territorial scales based on planning implications emerging from such understandings.

2 The strategic role of spatial planning and the treatment of scale

Strategic spatial planning

As a policy field acting within and across different administrative levels, spatial planning has been subjected to continuous reorientations, which have resulted in an array of policy adaptations and institutional forms. As widely discussed by a number of planning scholars over the past two decades, a significant reorientation has consisted in how spatial planning moved away from its distinctively regulatory scope towards adopting more *strategic* roles (Healey et al. 1997; Albrechts et al. 2003; Albrechts 2004, 2006; Salet, Faludi 2000). Until the late 1980s, spatial plans prepared at different levels of planning administration centred on ‘Euclidean’

concepts (Friedmann 1993), such as central place hierarchies, urban settlement patterns, physical proximity or commuting patterns between cities. As argued by Healey (2004), this rather positivist conception of space as a primary social ordering principle (Graham, Healey 1999) has been challenged by the emergence of a relational conception often endorsed by the spatial relations of territories through strategic spatial planning ‘episodes’ (Healey 2004; 2006; Davoudi, Strange 2009). In this respect, strategic spatial plans are prepared based on spatial concepts (e.g. Fischler 1995; van Duinen 2004; Dühr 2007) that tend to treat territorial scales more fluidly, which evidently implies their redefinition. As argued by Davoudi (2012), the conception of spatial and scalar order hence moves away from the positivist tradition that seeks to “tame space and create order” (432), towards an interpretive tradition where both scale and space are regarded “... as socially constructed with contingent boundaries which are constantly territorialized and open to political contestation” (432–433).

The ‘revival of strategic spatial planning’ (Salet, Faludi 2000; see also Albrechts 2004: 743) during the 1990s and its evolution in Europe to date therefore requires that the planning domain supplements its focus on projects and land use regulation (Albrechts 2001) with an emphasis on innovative place-making activities based on relational processes for decision-making (Healey 2007). Despite the rigid, cascade-like hierarchy of planning systems, the new focus on place qualities addressed by strategic spatial planning stresses the formation of horizontal networks of actors as a means to influence territorial transformations (Healey 2004; 2006). While this reorientation of governance capacities has been most evident insofar as fostering competitive cities and city-regions in milieus where territorial relationships are characterized by complex urban and regional dynamics, the range of plans influenced by the strategic logic is wide and can cover different levels of planning administration from national to local. This situation entails that strategic spatial planning becomes essentially discretionary in the sense that its essence is to link (strategic) discussions to policies. In other words, with planning playing a strategic role, national governments enable themselves to move freely within the planning system when it comes to pursuing particular interests (e.g. in accelerating development processes). In this light, strategic spatial planning interventions somewhat stress the principle of subsidiarity as the sole

technical-administrative arrangement for sharing competences for decision-making in planning.

As such, strategic spatial planning does not deal with a particular content (as comprehensive-integrated planning systems do). In contrast with forms of regulatory planning, strategic spatial planning is negotiated by a number of actors attempting to shape spatial development. Hence, scales shift from being 'hard-edged' containers to rather flexible and less-defined spaces. In complementing (hard) regulatory spaces of planning, 'soft spaces' emerge as arenas that bring different policy actors together to rework 'the real geographies of development' (Allmendinger, Haughton 2009). Soft spaces thus result from the need to attain effective policy delivery and policy integration (*ibid.*).

Strategic selectivity and territorial scales

These governance processes are related to the politics of scale and, in particular, to its social construction, for "... it is geographical scale that defines the boundaries and bounds the identities around which control is exerted and contested" (Smith 1992: 66). Consequently, there is a scale division of politics (Herod 1991) expressed in terms of various spatial qualifiers: local, regional, national etc. However, the complexity of these political forces can be seen in processes of 'scale jumping', whereby political claims and power established at one geographical scale are expanded to another (Smith 2000). In addressing the contradiction between mobility and fixity, and the question of content and form in the politics of space, Cox (1997) defines the distinction between spaces of dependence and spaces of engagement. The first are defined by those more or less localized social relations upon which we depend for the realization of essential interests and for which there are no substitutes elsewhere (e.g. local utility agencies). In contrast, spaces of engagement are those in which the politics of securing a space of dependence unfolds. This may be at a more global scale than the space of dependence (e.g. job markets). Spaces of engagement are constructed through networks of association that define their spatial form.

Selectivity of spatial strategies hence occurs both vertically and horizontally. When governments act through the levels of the planning systems, not only do they 'exclude' or 'jump' specific scales, but they also tend to disregard actors within the same level. This is clearly evi-

dent at the local level where 'discontinuous' maps of political affiliations are superimposed onto the homogeneity of municipal jurisdictions. It is such discontinuous maps that ultimately tie together the different administrative levels, while conditioning the transference of vertical directives. At the same time, not only nested vertical scalar relations are power-asymmetrical (as stressed by Leitner and Miller 2007: 121); power-asymmetries may also occur horizontally. As opposed to Marston, such state strategic planning relations are horizontal relations of scale. These asymmetries of power also occur horizontally in the context of recent discourses pertaining to city-regions, whereby the so-called 'urban municipalities' attempt to appropriate the space of contiguous (rural) municipalities in an attempt to redefine their territorial structure – oftentimes hierarchical – and with the aim of establishing a strategic development pathway for city-regions themselves.

This article intends to unfold the vertical and hierarchical planning structures that conceal not only the entry points into politics, but also how national governments tend to use planning in an opportunistic and privileged manner. While it is acknowledged that the nested scale delimits practical agency as a necessary outcome of its organization (Marston et al. 2005), this article will not consider a 'flat ontology' in relation to scales. Methodologically, it will rather refer to conventional scales for the purpose of clarifying the selective functioning associated with planning systems. Considering the vertical structure of the institutionalized planning levels, it is argued that policies are also implemented horizontally and discretionally within indeterminate spaces of laws and policies.

From the administrative perspective of planning systems, there are at least four territorial scales, depending on the content and scope of each type of plan (Neuman 1996; Font 2011). National plans define the national general policies and spatial strategies, combining objectives of economic planning, often centred on the argument surrounding territorial equilibrium or re-equilibrium. Moreover, they might also address issues such as the design of major infrastructure mobility and general facilities, water resources, productive resources and large land banks. The second level belongs to regional plans (i.e. provincial plans), which beyond being the simple implementation of national plans generally address specific issues such as large residential growth areas, public transport (especially commuter rail and intermodality), and

the definition of territorial nodal systems (functional units, network of historic centres, location of conflicting activities, large retail areas etc.). In general, these plans integrate issues usually treated on a sectorial basis. The third level corresponds with that of municipal plans, which address the local scale of urban space through the specification of actions for guiding the transformation of built areas (maintenance, improvement or reform of urban tissues and public spaces, amongst others). Finally, comprising the fourth level, local plans address zoning schemes and the classification of different urban areas in terms of land uses and building types and regulations.

The strategic role of spatial planning

With all the above being said, what is 'strategic' about the 'strategic role' of spatial planning and how does this relate to the 'steering role' of nation-states? As Jessop (1990) contends, instead of losing its capacities as a result of its 'hollowing out' progression (Rhodes 1994), nation-states continue to have a fixed 'steering' role, implemented through 'strategic selectivity' (260). This essentially means that the state has an inherent capacity to decide which specific actors or institutional arrangements it is to favour in terms of handing over powers and allocating resources. The power-related character embedded in the notion of strategic selectivity can also encompass aspects of 'spatiality'. As such, 'spatial selectivity' would then refer to the scales, locations and spaces that the state may or may not be willing to favour by assigning them different tasks and responsibilities (Jones 1997). It is precisely through spatiality that the selectivity debate turns out to be relevant when analysing the changing character of spatial planning. As portrayed by Jones (*ibid.*: 831), "spatial selectivity implies that the state has a tendency to privilege certain places through accumulation strategies, state projects, and hegemonic projects".

Building on the notions of strategic selectivity and spatial selectivity, Brenner (2003a, 2003b, 2004, 2006) advances the idea of 'state spatial selectivity'. The reorientations regarding the institutional set-up of spatial planning can thus be understood in terms of state spatial projects and strategies as 'state spatial selectivities', which refer to spaces supported by spatial strategies and forms of urban regulation: "... (state spatial) selectivities emerge and are continually modified as inherited formations of state spatial organization interact with emer-

gent political strategies oriented towards the creation of new geographies of state policy and political economic life" (Brenner 2004: 456).

State spatial projects are characterized by initiatives aimed at providing functional unity, operational coordination and organizational coherence (Brenner 2003a). Such projects may include programmes to modify the geographical structure of intergovernmental arrangements (e.g. changing administrative boundaries) or reconfigure their rules of operation (via processes of centralization and decentralization). State spatial strategies are aimed at similar targets albeit mobilized through diverse policy instruments, including economic development initiatives, industry policies, infrastructure investments, spatial planning programmes, labour market policies, regional policies, and so forth (*ibid.*: 93). In Brenner's terms, state spatial projects have evolved since the time of Keynesian welfarism, from being centralized and administratively uniformed towards becoming decentralized and administratively customized. Similarly, state spatial strategies have evolved from being implemented by a single scale promoting socio-economic activities across national territories, towards being executed by multiple scales concentrating socio-economic development at specific locations.

3 Overview of spatial planning systems in Denmark and Catalonia

The Danish spatial planning system

Legal framework and planning tradition

The Danish Planning Act came into force in 1992, based on the planning reform adopted in the 1970s (Ministry of the Environment 1992). The Planning Act is intended to ensure *appropriate development* in the whole country based on overall planning and economic considerations that meet the interests of society with respect to land use, while geared towards protecting nature and the environment (Ministry of the Environment 2007a). As of 2015, the Danish spatial planning system delegates authority, competence and responsibility to both national and local levels. As a whole, the national planning policy framework is constituted by planning reports and guidelines, binding planning directives, and intervention in municipal planning for selective themes and projects of international, national, regional and local interest.

Denmark belongs to the 'comprehensive-integrated tradition' of planning systems and policies, which explicitly seeks to deliver a certain degree of horizontal and vertical integration of policies across sectors and jurisdictions (CEC 1997, 1999). As such, the comprehensive-integrated tradition aims to achieve spatial coordination through a hierarchy of plans put forward by 'nested' levels of planning administration from national to local. In Denmark, the birth of comprehensive-integrated planning should be understood as a direct response to the significant socio-spatial challenges that resulted from the country's industrial development and rapid economic growth during the post-war era. Of utmost relevance was the establishment of a so-called 'urban pattern' based on central place theory advanced by national and regional plans during the 1970s and 1980s, which yielded hierarchical spatial arrangements within individual counties. This enabled a more even spatial distribution of demography, labour market and economic growth, which contributed to securing more equal socio-economic development throughout the whole country (Galland 2014).

Since the early 1990s, however, the rationale, aims, contents and development orientations of spatial planning shifted as a result of political and economic driving forces prompted by supra-national and national policy interventions, as well as the Planning Act's shift from 'equal' to 'appropriate development' in 1992 (Galland 2012a, 2012b). While national and regional plans before this major shift were regarded as a societal need and as an orchestrated effort fostering an 'ordered' expansion of a city hierarchy, national planning since the 1990s has placed more emphasis on the spatial development of specific city-regions while the land-use focus of regional plans has been given up.

Rescaling of planning tasks and responsibilities

A reform of local government structure was implemented by a liberal-conservative coalition government in 2007, which had a significant impact on the Danish planning system. The reform modified the geographies of inter-governmental arrangements in Denmark by merging 275 municipalities into 98 larger units (see Figure 1) and abolishing 14 counties. The territorial and administrative restructuring that this structural reform brought about generated a major redistribution of tasks and responsibilities between levels of government and transformed the comprehensive-integrated rationale that formerly characterised the Danish planning system.

As the territorial size of administrative units was deemed inappropriate in light of overlapping responsibilities and functions between municipalities, the structural reform was geared towards efficiency considerations and managerial effectiveness, but no recommendations in terms of the spatial restructuring of the territory were delivered. This meant that territorial considerations regarding conventional peripheral problems, functional relationships (mobility and commuting patterns) between municipalities or other geographical appraisals were largely overlooked (Jørgensen 2004).

The 2007 structural reform transformed the Danish planning system from its traditional multi-tier configuration to a double-tier structure comprised of national and municipal planning. To a great extent, this shift eradicated the hierarchy of plans formerly dictated by the principle of framework control. The structural reform privileged municipalities by allocating them a large number of physical planning tasks and responsibilities, formerly assumed by the counties. Several regional planning provisions related to land use were thus repealed and transferred to municipalities, which upheld the right to undertake and decide upon physical planning in urban areas and the countryside. In doing so, the Planning Act also gave the municipalities the necessary autonomy to designate urban zones, locate transport facilities and manage aspects concerned with agriculture, cultural and historical heritage, amongst others (Ministry of the Environment 2007).

The structural reform similarly transferred planning controls to the national level, including the spatial planning for Greater Copenhagen. National planning became reinforced in relation with its capacity to intervene in municipal planning affairs and projects of national and/or regional relevance through the right of veto. Based on the above redistribution of tasks at municipal and national levels, the 2007 structural reform could be regarded as a 'centralized-decentralization' or a recentralization of government (Andersen 2008).

The abolition of the county level was 'filled-in' by the formation of five regions, which were mainly created for health care administration purposes, although with a parallel responsibility of preparing 'visionary' regional spatial development plans. Before 2007, regional (land-use) plans had been imperative, not only as a binding instrument for municipal plans with sectorial interests and objectives, but also as a conciliatory tool to balance sectorial considerations. Regional planning processes were aimed

at balancing conflicting interests and coordinating objectives related with *inter alia* traffic services (such as harbours, railways and roads) and siting of large-scale facilities (e.g. solid-waste treatment plants, sewage disposal sites, petrochemical plants and even windmill parks).

In sum, the series of policy and institutional shifts suggest that the 2007 structural reform triggered the ‘softening’ of the principle of framework control, which is evocative of decreased harmonization and coherence between the scope of plans and policies at different levels of planning administration (Galland 2012b). This overall restructuring of the spatial planning system has several implications not only

as regards the ‘strategic role’ that each level of planning administration currently plays, but also as to how territorial scales are redefined as a result of the spatial interrelation between levels of planning. These implications are described in the following sections.

The Catalan spatial planning system

Legal framework and planning tradition

Catalonia has historically belonged to the ‘urbanism tradition’ of spatial planning systems and policies (CEC 1997), a style that mainly occurs at the local level through building regu-

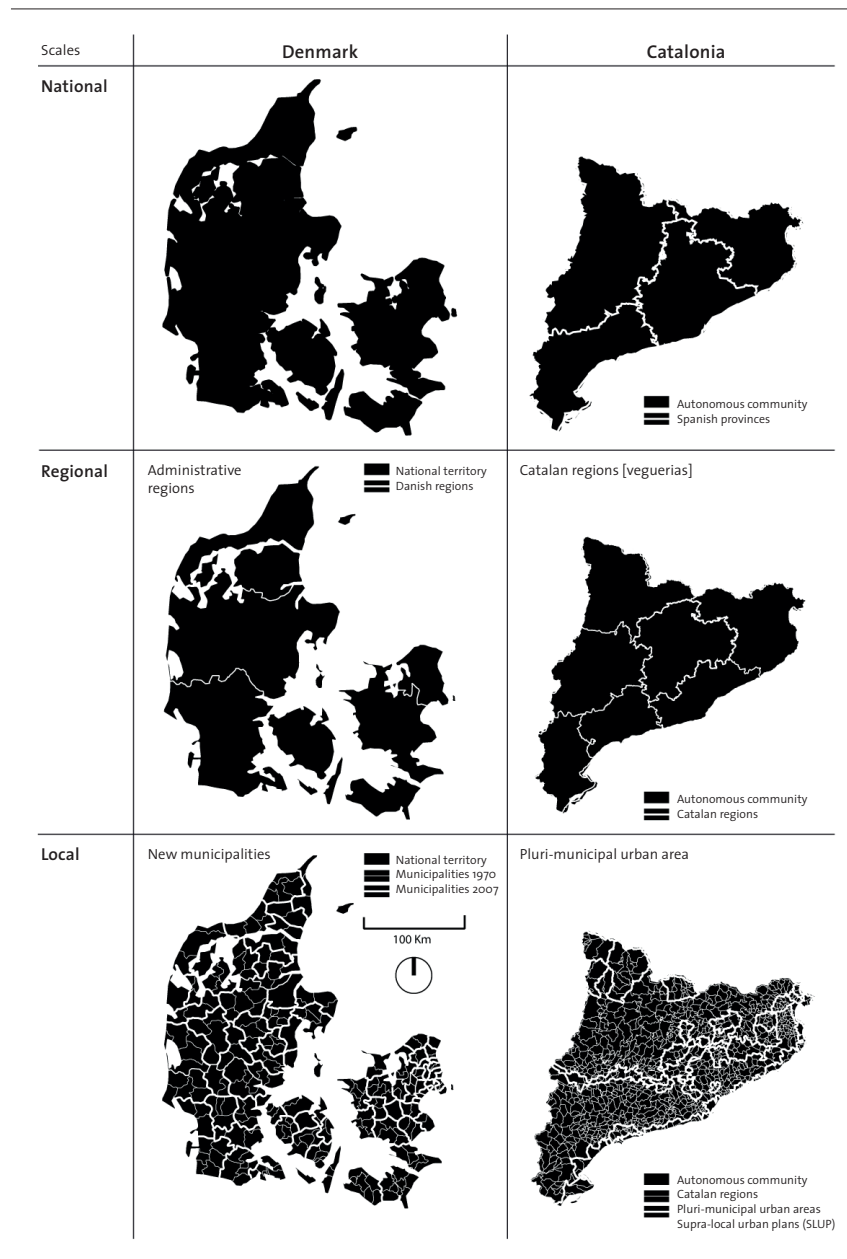


Fig. 1: Denmark and Catalonia with Administrative Divisions. (Source: Authors)

lations (Farinós-Dasí 2006). Typical of Mediterranean countries, it has a strong architectural essence and concern with urban design, townscape and building control. The urbanism tradition is criticized due to the limitations in managing space through the smallest geographical unit available (e.g. municipalities) where extended territorial dynamics cannot be intercepted. Although countries that can be classified under this planning tradition do not usually have spatial plans at a higher scale, Catalonia has made significant progress in developing policy instruments and institutions to overcome the dominance of the local scale.

The Catalan planning system is split in two legal frameworks. The first is the National Planning Law of 1983, which provides standards for implementing national, regional and sectorial planning. The second framework is based on the urban planning laws that have provided the tools for local management and development since 1956. Despite the legal fragmentation of the planning system, the National Planning Law clearly states the legal regime of supra-local planning within three levels (Figure 1): plans for the whole Catalan national territory; partial plans for the Catalan regions, and urban plans at the local level. In addition, the Urban Planning Law of 2002 implements a fourth level: the supra-local urban plans, aimed at the coordination of municipal plans within complex urban areas.

Rescaling of planning tasks and responsibilities

Catalonia has a remarkable historical background in supra-local planning, such as Barcelona's expansion [*ensanche*], designed by Cerdà in 1859, or the Regional Planning of Rubio i Tudurí, developed in the 1930s. During Franco's dictatorship some regional planning efforts were made, especially for the area of Barcelona, such as the County Plan of 1953, the failed Barcelona's Regional Plan of 1966 and the Metropolitan General Plan of 1976, the only one that was approved and still has legally binding status.

Since the reestablishment of democracy, the transfer of planning decision-making from the government of Spain to the autonomous government of Catalonia generated an outstanding improvement in municipal urban planning (Ferrer Sabaté 1999) as a means for collective vindication. In addition, coherent with the initiated administrative reform, the Federated State Planning Act of 1983 provided the Autonomous Government of Catalonia with the capacity to

develop supra-local planning at different levels. However, during the period 1983–2003 – twenty years of conservative government – the development of supra-local planning was virtually non-existent. Only two plans of the Federated State Planning Act were drafted: the National Plan of Catalonia (1995) – a pedagogic instrument without any regulatory status – and the Regional Plan of Terres de l'Ebre (2001) – just one of the seven that should have been developed.

In 2003, the victory of the Socialist Party in the Autonomous Government's election and the creation of the Department of Territorial Planning in 2004 reaffirmed confidence in supra-local planning. The Department of Territorial Planning not only represented a turn in politics, but also in planning practice. In 2005, the revision of the Law of Urbanism improved the urban planning policy and its linkage to regional planning. Despite the fragmentation of the legal framework, supra-local plans and urban development plans were considered to be an integrated technical activity where physical boundaries between them tend to fade, although they relate to specific policies (Font 2011).

For the purpose of attaining territorial re-equilibrium, Catalonia's government relies on the level of the Catalan regions as a framework for developing the national planning model, following the example of some European autonomous governments such as Flanders, a federated state in northern Belgium. In the case of Flanders, regional – or provincial – plans are the strategic framework for pluri-municipal coordination (Albrechts 2001). In Catalonia's case, regional plans are not only strategic, but also explicitly operative. In order to increase their efficiency, regional plans implement a selective approach regarding their thematic scope. They only address three issues (open spaces, settlements and mobility infrastructures), avoiding the wide-ranging and comprehensive tendency of general urban plans (Nel-lo 2006).

Furthermore, regional plans rely on fifteen regional design principles, which today are a manifesto of the recent generation of supra-local plans in Catalonia. Besides qualitative criteria, regional plans also respond to quantitative variables. The proposed growth scenario for the next fifteen years is considered not as a blueprint image, but as an attempt to strengthen nodal settlements. However, due to the policy inaccuracy of regional plans at the local scale, complex territories such as medium-sized urban areas are to be developed through the so-called SLUPs.

The government gives SLUPs the role of ‘spatial linkage’ between the regional and the local scale, tying together the multiple levels of the territorial planning model (Nel-lo 2006). Also, due to the diversity of the territory, SLUPs were classified into six thematic types: heritage preservation, mountain territories, strategic residential areas, major infrastructures, coastal system and the above mentioned urban areas. As a result of the implementation of thirty-seven SLUPs during the socialist government, today over 30% of Catalonia’s land is regulated through comprehensive supra-local planning. Despite the deferred binding policies of SLUPs – they must be implemented by local plans – the territory of Catalonia is clearly under imminent administrative restructuring and rescaling processes of planning implementation.

4 Strategic roles of planning instruments and their articulation across levels of government

In what follows, we attempt to show that national governments tend to have a double standard with regard to planning systems and their implementation. On the one hand, planning systems tend to erase boundaries in practice – albeit not under the law – between levels of planning administration to implement their policies with horizontal coherence (i.e. merging sectorial interventions). While this approach has an impact on all administrative levels, it concurrently disregards the principle of subsidiarity. On the other hand, sub-national governments hold only limited competence within the scope of each planning level as a resulting structural restriction of the top-down regime.

Denmark

The Danish national planning policy framework for comprehensive spatial planning and land-use decision-making is constituted by planning reports, binding regulations, guidelines and intervention in municipal planning for themes and projects of international, national, regional and local interest (Table 1). The strategic role of the national planning report is to set out overall spatial policies and objectives after each government election. It focuses on providing advisory guidance and recommendations to lower levels of government on spatial development matters, often through the use of varying spatial concepts. The reports are prepared by the Nature Agency – a body within the Ministry of

the Environment – based on cooperation with other relevant ministries. The contents and discourses associated with these reports, which have treated territorial scales differently since 1997, show that national-level planning reports adopt distinctive strategic roles and orientations in promoting spatial development (Galland 2012a).

Several such national planning reports have been particularly influenced by European spatial concepts, such as *polycentricity*, *balanced spatial structure*, *urban networks*, *dynamic zones of integration*, and so forth (ibid.). In contrast, however, the latest national planning report published in 2013 (Figure 2) articulates a less strategic spatial approach and does not address spatial coordination challenges at sub-national scales. The report is based on the spatial analyses of commuting patterns, showing that growth concentrates within city-regions located along the national highway system, the so-called ‘big-H’ (Ministry of the Environment 2013). As the report focuses on the growth of metropolitan and/or specific city-regions, it is primarily based on adopted growth policies from other ministries and thus continues to be reminiscent of the competitiveness agenda already assumed during the 2000s. The development orientation displayed by these reports is thereby geared towards differentiation of space.

Since the implementation of the municipal reform, and until recently, the Ministry of the Environment has also been responsible for generating the so-called *Overview of national interests on municipal planning* [*Oversigt over statslige interesser i kommuneplanlægning*], which outlines the aims and requirements of the government with respect to municipal planning (Ministry of the Environment 2011). The overview includes aspects concerned with urban development, energy supply, green transport, green growth, tourism and recreation, use of rural areas and aspects of nature protection. Published every fourth year, the *Overview* should be understood as the main national planning instrument that municipalities should abide by to avoid veto of municipal plan proposals. Moreover, national directives are prepared and adopted by the Ministry of the Environment, which set out legal provisions on specific issues of national interest, e.g. determining the path for natural gas pipelines, the siting of wind turbines and electrical transmission lines etc.

Following the rescaling of metropolitan planning to the national level, a land-use planning directive for Greater Copenhagen (*Fingerplan 2013* Figure 3) establishes a spatial frame-



Fig. 2: The Government's Map of Denmark.
 (Source: Ministry of the Environment, 2013a)

work for the whole metropolitan region by securing future urban development in accordance with the principle of station proximity (Ministry of the Environment 2013b). In terms of scope, this directive is both strategic and operative. In contrast to its predecessors, its binding character implies steering urban development via phases (i.e. balancing between land and building supply, and expected demand in the medium and long terms), whereby only specific areas can be developed within 12-year time frames (i.e. the municipal plan) and, in several cases, provided that political agreements are reached with respect to siting specific infrastructure facilities (e.g. a railway station). In this

sense, the binding character of the *Fingerplan 2013* limits municipal development ambitions, though it also allows them to prioritize development objectives.

At the regional level, the recently revoked Regional Spatial Development Plans (RSDPs) aimed at fostering growth in close connection with business development. The RSDPs differed notably from the former physical, land-use regional plans (repealed from the Planning Act in 2007) in that their visionary scope lacked a 'spatial' dimension, which restricted them to the provision of (non-spatial) guidance for business growth possibilities rather than attempting to direct spatial change. RSDPs focused on po-

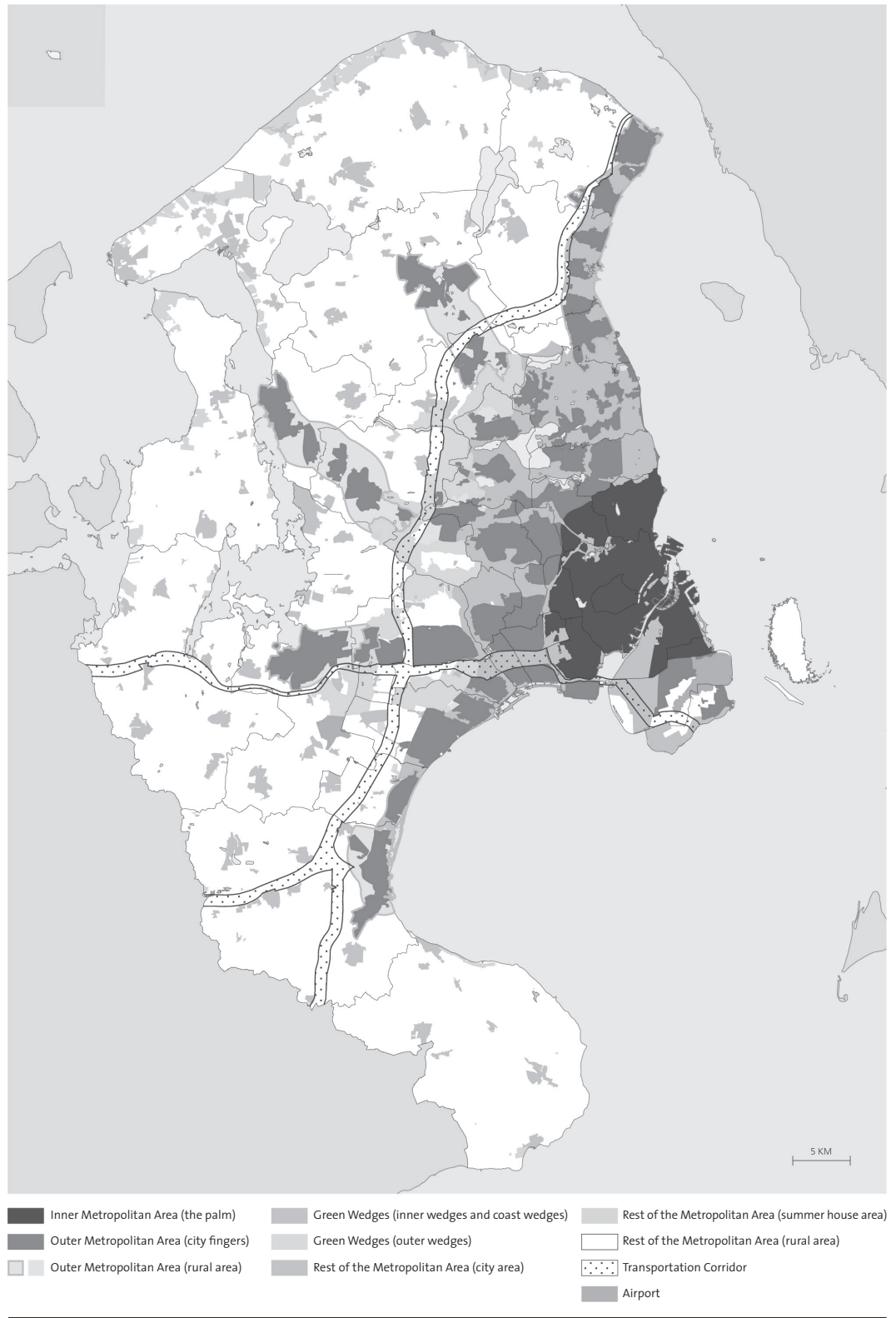


Fig. 3: Finger Plan 2013.
(Source: Ministry of the Environment, 2013b)

tential regional strengths within diverse sectorial areas and were thus meant to ensure cohesion with sectorial plans and strategies, namely business development, employment, Local Agenda 21, and education and culture. However, RSDPs turned out to be a failure as their

implementation capacities became largely hindered by coalitions of actors at times operating beyond the scope of the formal planning system (Galland 2012b). RSDPs themselves were revoked from the Planning Act in early 2014, while some of their capacities were transferred

to a new act on regional development undertaken by another ministry.

The municipal plan is the main political instrument of the council for development control and serves as a strategy for social and economic development, as well as environmental improvement. The plan combines political objectives, land-use guidelines and a framework for the contents of local plans for individual parts of the municipal jurisdiction. Altogether, the municipal plan provides the linkage between national planning interests and detailed local plans. Municipal plans cannot conflict with national planning directives, water resource plans, European directives (e.g. Natura 2000 and Action Plans) and, until recently, with

the description of desired future development put forward by the now revoked RSDPs.

Catalonia

The strategic spatial role of the ‘national plan’ is to induce the discussion of general issues of physical planning (e.g. infrastructures, service networks, water resources etc.). This approach is based on the superposition of several layers of physical analysis and proposals to evidence the suitability of the ‘form of the territory’ through a methodological approach similar to Ian McHarg’s overlapped layers (1956). Such territorial specificity hence determines the thematic selectivity of the plan, which en-

Tab. 1: The Danish Spatial Planning Policy Framework. (Source: Authors)

Policy institutions			Policy instruments		
Level	Planning authority	Number of inhabitants	Type of plan or instrument	Description	Legal effect
<i>National</i>	Ministry of the Environment (until June 2015)*	5.58 million	National planning report	National visions regarding functional physical development	Advisory guidelines and recommendations
			Overview of national interests regarding municipal plans	National interests arising from legislation, action plans, sector plans and agreements between national authorities	Binding for local authorities. Right to veto municipal plan proposals when contradicting national interests
			Greater Copenhagen Finger Plan Directive	Establishes a spatial framework for the spatial development of the metropolitan region according to spatial principles and land-use concepts	Binding for local authorities
			Other national planning directives	Maps and legal provisions (i.e. coastal zone planning, siting for wind turbines, location of natural gas pipelines and transmission lines)	Binding for local authorities
			Sectorial plans	Water & Natura 2000 plans, climate plans, traffic plans etc.	Binding for local authorities
<i>(Regional)</i>	5 administrative regions	~ 1,000,000 (wide deviations)	Regional spatial development plans (repealed in 2014)	Advisory and visionary plans	Binding for local authorities (until February 2014)
<i>Local</i>	98 municipal councils	~ 30,000 (wide deviations)	Municipal plans	Policies, maps and land-use regulations	Binding for local authorities
			Local plans	Maps and detailed legal land-use regulations	Binding for landowners

* Following the June 2015 general election in Denmark, a minority government formed by the centre-right, conservative-liberal party *Venstre* assumed office, supported by three other right-of-centre parties. After forming the new government and still in the midst of ongoing political debate over ‘simplifying’ the Planning Act to facilitate more economic growth (Galland, Sørensen 2015), national planning functions and responsibilities were transferred from the Ministry of the Environment to the Ministry of Business and Growth.

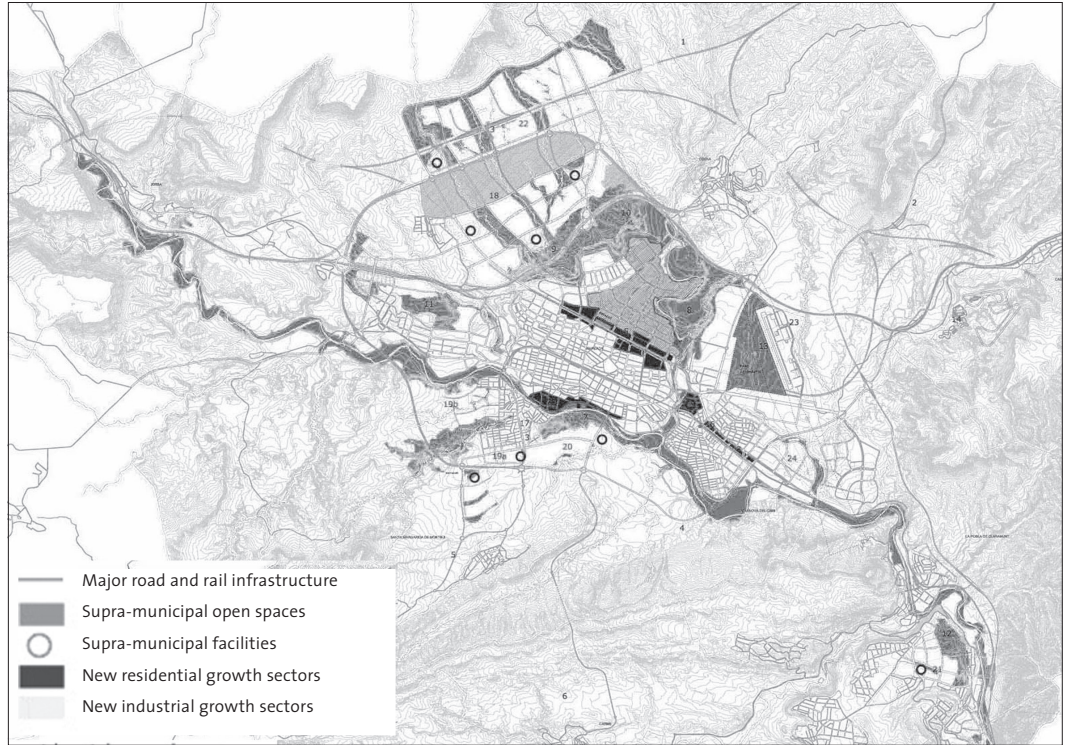


Fig. 4: Example of a Supra-Local Urban Plan in Catalonia (Basin of Odena).
(Source: Authors)

Tab. 2: The Catalan Spatial Planning Policy Framework.
(Source: Authors)

Policy institutions			Policy instruments		
Level	Planning authority	Number of inhabitants	Type of plan or instrument	Description	Legal effect
<i>Autonomous Community</i>	Department of Territorial Development and Public Works	7.5 million	General Territorial Plan	National visions regarding functional physical development	Advisory guidelines and recommendations
			Sectorial plans	Planning criteria according to main national priorities (e.g. large infrastructure, health and education facilities' network, large protected natural areas etc.)	Binding for local authorities
<i>Regional [Veguerias]</i>	7 regions approved in 2010. Still not implemented as a formal administration (Department of Territorial Development and Public Works).	~ 1,000,000 (wide deviations)	Regional spatial plans	Advisory, visionary plans and policies with special emphasis in open spaces	Binding for county councils and local authorities
<i>Sub-regional</i>	Ad hoc implementation (Department of Territorial Development and Public Works)		Supra-local Urban Plans	Selective policies, maps and land-use regulations	Binding for local authorities and sectorial departments
<i>Local</i>	947 municipalities	~ 10,000 (wide deviations)	Municipal plans	General policies, maps and land-use regulations. Definition of Special and Partial plans	Binding for local authorities and landowners
			Special plans Partial plans	Maps and detailed legal land-use regulations	Binding for landowners

asures some key operations articulate the whole Catalan territory. The National Planning Law establishes an explicit top-down sequence for drafting planning levels. However, the central government of the autonomous community decides to undertake firstly the elaboration of regional plans and plans for urban areas without reviewing the National Plan. Conceptually, using an opposite direction, the National Plan is superseded *de facto* by the approval of the seven regional plans. This technical and administrative strategy leaves the National Plan virtually without strategic spatial content.

The strategic spatial role of regional plans is to synthesise the thematic layers of the National Plan to fix two visions, one with a concrete character (the physical structure of the urban region) and another with a conceptual vision (the so-called 'territorial model' or 'key diagram'). The National Planning Law states that the role of regional plans is to distribute the growth areas, to strengthen polycentricism and to foster intermediate cities, in consideration of the re-equilibrium objectives of the National Plan. Instead, the technicians of central government interpret regional plans as a 'localized' proposal (Esteban 2006), being fully binding for the municipal plans. In particular, regional plans emphasize the management and protection of open spaces and landscapes, as evidenced in the Regional Plan of the Central Counties. However, despite their physical language and tone, regional plans have limited accuracy in terms of establishing regulations on the local scale. This is why SLUPs, having a more comprehensive scope, are ultimately implemented.

SLUPs are 'catalysts' of the territorial model to be developed through guidelines and binding policies deferred until the approval of local plans. These 'intermediate plans' are implemented as 'strategic projects' to integrate the urban-region (Elinbaum 2013a), thereby locating and guiding the demand of activities so as to avoid impulsive developments. The Urban Planning Law determines that the SLUPs must be coherent with the determinations of the national and regional planning, but does not imply that they must be drafted later. Therefore, the *ad hoc* implementation of SLUPs increases the strategic spatial content of regional plans and also replaces local plans when punctual interventions are to be implemented from a pluri-municipal perspective (Esteban 2012). Due to their comprehensiveness and flexibility for bounding intervention areas (Figure 4), SLUPs complement regional plans. In this

light, SLUPs turn out to be an operational and executive extension of regional plans in managing municipal plans.

The strategic spatial role of municipal general plans is to set up the urban structure or the so-called 'territorial organic structure' as the network of public and open spaces. Despite the obsolete nature of municipal boundaries in relation to built-up areas, the Urban Planning Law establishes that municipal general plans must design the urban and rural areas within each municipal jurisdiction. However, the combination of regional plans and SLUPs establishes a new administrative system that restructures 'the local' within a discontinuous territory, thus moving away from a 'matrix of municipalities' to an 'archipelago of settlements'. In this context, the limited scope of municipal general plans is restricted in regulating only the executive phase of planning, evaluating new building licenses – lot by lot – and detailed plans for urban renewal or within the limits of the built-up city.

5 Discussion: Redefinition of territorial scales

So far the paper has shown that even though planning systems are established on a legally-based policy relationship between the different levels of implementation, national governments tend to strategically correlate each level of spatial planning. In this section we attempt to show how planning strategies actually redefine the meaning of territorial scales in both Denmark and Catalonia.

The redefinition of the national scale

The national scale in Denmark has been defined and redefined in accordance with different spatial logics (positivistic and relational) and spatial concepts influenced by internal and external political agendas. Before the 1990s, the national scale was conceived as a space of hierarchical central places defined by urban settlement patterns. Such positivistic logic contrasts with the relational logic of the post-1990s, which redefined the national scale in terms of concentric urban networks and one international metropolis (the Øresund region) (Ministry of Environment and Energy 1997, 2000). In 2006, the national scale was strategically redefined according to a 'balanced spatial structure' comprised of two metropolitan regions (Greater Copenhagen and Eastern Jutland) and

one commuting region (Zealand) (Ministry of the Environment 2006). At the same time, the national scale was redefined in terms of the metropolitan (or city-region) scale (see subsection below), influenced by spatial concepts drawn from the European Spatial Development Perspective (CSD 1999). In this sense, Greater Copenhagen and the Øresund Region were portrayed as one metropolitan region shaped as a ‘dynamic zone of integration’ alongside a commuting hinterland (Zealand), while Eastern Jutland was depicted as a ‘growth corridor’ representing a functional conurbation defined by a well-connected urban structure and a coherent labour market (Galland 2012a). In 2013, the national scale was articulated based on commuting patterns which show that economic and population growth concentrates within city-regions located along the national highway system. The role of national scale has thus been demarcated less strategically given that neither spatial concepts nor specific spatial strategies are used to define it.

The clearness of the national scale is proportional to the active tension – outwards and inwards – with peripheral nations and with sub-national administrations (Sahlins 1989). This conflict of interest is reminiscent of the Catalan case, where the central government intends to maintain territorial autonomy in attempting to attain independence from Spain. This tension, however, is also reproduced downwards through the processes of institutional ‘assimilation’ and ‘integration’ imposed by the Catalan government to the local sphere. This context is important for understanding the technocratic rationality of the Catalan planning system (Elinbaum 2013a). The problems of the National Plan (i.e. the plan for the whole Catalan territory) are rescaled to the regional level *per se*, since there are no stable state administrations at the level of the Catalan regions [*veguerias*]. This strategy speeds up the drafting of regional plans within the same government legislature while increasing the binding scope of policies, which are six times more detailed than the national ones. Hence, the interrelationship of cascade-shaped planning levels no longer has a linear and unequivocal relationship.

The redefinition of the regional scale

From the inception of regional planning in Denmark until the mid-2000s, the regional scale was perceived in relation with the administrative level of the county, and planned accordingly in terms of land use. With the

rescaling of regional (land-use) planning responsibilities after the structural reform, regional (development) planning has taken place in new spaces of governance, characterised by a fragmented governance landscape. Different processes of ‘filling in’ entailed the creation of ‘soft spaces’ of planning and governance that emerged at the regional and metropolitan levels (Galland 2012b). For instance, in 2006 the Ministry of the Environment advanced initiatives to create partnership projects between municipal councils, regional councils and the state on the future development of the two aforementioned metropolitan regions. The intention behind promoting such governance arrangements was mainly intended to integrate transport challenges and urban development within the contours of these suggested functional conurbations (Ministry of the Environment 2006). The promotion of these initiatives also revealed the ministry’s lack of reliance on the administrative regions as the suitable level at which spatial planning strategies should be formulated. Instead, soft spaces were advocated to stimulate bottom-up initiatives to work across policy sectors and different administrative levels.

Catalan regions, on the other hand, are justified through the historical contingency of the past, especially for blurring Spanish provinces, but are used to modernize planning areas fitting current dynamics of territorial integration (Bassols 2004). Regional planning becomes the new global benchmark for the other levels (national and local) of the planning system as a matrix that enables spatial and temporal coherence of all the strategies, policies and spatial projects (Elinbaum 2014). In this sense, Catalan regions can be understood as operative devices capable of displaying local management in an unprecedented way and as new spaces of dependence for substituting gradually historic and anachronistic jurisdictions.

The redefinition of the metropolitan scale

The ‘administrative lightness’ at the scale of metropolitan regions and medium-sized plurimunicipal urban areas produces spaces for governance suitable for implementing the competences of supra-local planning (regulations, descriptions, statistics etc.). In accordance with Cox’s concept of spaces of engagement, this ‘intermediate scale’ introduces local actors in a new territorial regime and vision.

In Denmark, the abolition of the Metropolitan Council of Greater Copenhagen (*Hoved-*

stadens Udviklingsråd) in 2007 and the upward rescaling of its functions and competences to the Ministry of Environment enabled the latter to generate a binding directive aimed at establishing a metropolitan spatial development framework based on the enforcement of national spatial principles and concepts rooted in former positivist spatial logics (Ministry of the Environment 2007, 2013a).

In the Catalan case, the instrumental relationship between regional plans – the reference framework – and SLUPs – the comprehensive regional policies – is analogous to the relationship between general and sectorial plans (Elinbaum 2013b). The strategic role of regional plans is to provide the thematic specificity and a homogeneous and isotropic representation of the territory (i.e. having the same conditions at each point of the territory). At the same time, SLUPs provide the flexibility for adjusting the spatial selectivity of regional objectives to the uniqueness of each territory through a comprehensive approach, even replacing local plans.

The redefinition of the local [municipal] scale

The local scale has always been historically and geographically variable (Giddens 1984). The fluctuation of ‘the urban’ as a scale for social organization has been relevant according to its relationship to other scales at different times and places (Hall 1996). Until recently, the municipal scale in Denmark continued to be understood in terms of the spatial logic of a single town and its hinterland (i.e. one town – one municipality), a concept advanced in the 1970s. This understanding of the municipal scale was strongly related to the ‘central place’ settlement pattern (Christaller 1966), whereby the largest town in a given municipality took a central position in order to provide the remaining towns and villages (within and beyond the municipality itself) with access to basic and more specialized services.

As a result of structural reforms, as well as other recent processes of economies of scale, former municipalities in several European countries have been merged into larger administrative units (i.e. Denmark, Finland, Latvia *inter alia* and more recently France). This situation implies a radical shift away from the idea of service provision and the logic of hierarchical territorial positioning towards redefining the municipal scale in terms of networked territorial dynamics, whereby urban phenomena are reinterpreted based on the roles that medium

and small-sized cities and towns play in municipal spatial development processes. In Catalonia, the interrelation between scales allows for re-conceptualizing the idea of the city, as evidenced in the intentional role of each planning level. In short, considering current networked territorial dynamics, physical planning enables relocation of the scale of ‘the urban’ not only as a local problem but also as a regional problem, especially in the context of urban areas.

6 Conclusion

The analysis pertaining to the strategic role of spatial planning instruments as well as the evolving redefinition of territorial scales in both Denmark and Catalonia suggests that the conventional, hierarchical ‘cascade-shaped’ ideal of policy implementation is superseded. This occurs despite the fact that both spatial planning systems are based on a legal policy relationship between different levels of implementation. While these relatively small territories tend to converge in their alignment with strategic spatial planning, the implications stemming from rescaling processes radically diverge, as illustrated by the opposing fates of the regional level, as well as the distinctive means to reassure the ‘vertical spatial anchor’ for the stability and permanence of power structures.

Recent strategic spatial planning not only contributes to the clarification of the role and the interrelationship between the different planning levels and territorial scales, but also shows that planning systems are not a linear and incremental sequence of plans that structure the territory. Rather, planning systems turn out to be multifaceted and complex (i.e. iterative, open, co-evolutionary, technocratic) as they also constitute a steady and evolving political process. In this context, strategic spatial planning plays a key role in linking the presently ‘fragmented’ legal frameworks. Moreover, strategic spatial plans simplify the concurrent planning process between regional and municipal plans, transcending the generic and static planning levels, and generating new spaces of engagement where planning is needed.

At the ‘national’ level, spatial plans in both cases tend to converge increasingly in terms of strategic selectivity due to the open character of the plans’ scope and contents, which are often redefined after each drafting episode. However, the means to attaining strategic selectivity diverge considerably. In Denmark, the transition from positivist to relational spatial logics

Territorial scales	Denmark	Catalonia
National	From positivistic to relational spatial logics and spatial concepts. The former national structure of hierarchical central places is gradually replaced by concentric urban networks and other strategic spatial concepts exhibiting a relational character.	Thematic issues of the national scale are rescaled to the level of regions for increasing the bidding scope of policies.
Regional	From land-use planning to the promotion of 'soft spaces' seeking to integrate mobility demands and to stimulate bottom-up development initiatives.	Regions updated planning areas in order to fit current territorial dynamics of urbanization, blurring historic provinces, speeding up the drafting of plans. Regions are the new global benchmark for all state strategies, both national and local.
Metropolitan	The upward rescaling of metropolitan planning functions suggests the re-adaptation of a positivistic conception of this scale based on the enforcement of physical planning principles and concepts.	Regional objectives are readjusted to the uniqueness of each urban area and actors' interest through a comprehensive planning approach.
Municipal	The new pluri-municipal matrix (resulting from the municipal reform) redefines the scale of urban development, while medium and small-sized towns and cities play different roles within the larger (merged) municipalities.	The idea of the city is re-conceptualized due to the implementation of ad-hoc pluri-municipal plans for complex urban areas. 'The urban' is considered a local and a regional problem.

Tab. 3: Redefinition of Territorial Scales. (Source: Authors)

implied moving away from a national spatial structure founded on a 'central place' hierarchy towards a configuration based on polycentric development and balanced spatial structures to promote, firstly, concentric urban networks (Ministry of the Environment and Energy 1997, 2000) and thereafter 'growth corridors' and city-regions (Ministry of the Environment 2006, 2013a). The open and flexible character of Danish national planning policy thereby relates intrinsically to the rise of strategic spatial planning at the municipal level in various instances. This is coupled with the downward rescaling of spatial planning tasks and responsibilities from regional to municipal levels following structural reform. Both forms of strategic selectivity are indicative of the fact that the cascade-shaped ideal of the Danish planning system stands only as a façade (see below). In the case of Catalonia, the thematic selectivity of supra-local urban plans increases instrumental efficiency while promoting a governance landscape that somewhat stands against the principle of subsidiarity. For instance, due to thematic selectivity, Catalan regional plans can address design problems at the local level. The powerlines of regional plans are thus no longer indicative or normative, but rather binding.

The current state and fate of the regional scale in the two cases seems radically differ-

ent albeit the trend towards relational, strategic planning seems to prevail. In Denmark, the strategic nature of the regional scale becomes evident once land-use regulation is replaced with policy that fosters 'soft spaces' to integrate mobility demands while encouraging bottom-up development initiatives. The regional scale thereby becomes intermittent: it tends to appear or disappear after the map of municipalities or administrative regions is reorganized, and also when both municipal and regional functions are matched to acknowledge both the territorial uniqueness of city-regions as well as the interests of various coalitions of municipal actors. As the new reference for strategic spatial planning in Catalonia, regions themselves are used to adjust planning areas to supra-local dynamics of urbanization and to lessen the influence of provinces and historical regions. In addition, regions provide an isotropic representation of the territory, suitable for implementing redistribution policies.

The restructuring of the local level occurs by either merging municipalities or through the implementation of plans for pluri-municipal coordination purposes. In the first case, the new municipal administrations (resulting from the fusion of former municipalities) redefine the scale of urban development, whereby medium-sized cities and small towns play special-

ized roles. The second case relates to the rather functionalist implementation of plans for managing conurbations, which dilutes the idea of the city as a fact linked to municipal idiosyncrasy. In both Denmark and Catalonia, 'the city' as such is currently increasingly considered to be not only an urban but also a regional subject.

Both in theory and in practice, keeping the 'planning cascade' somewhat intact is rather functional and convenient for either left-wing or right-wing governments. In this sense, both Denmark and Catalonia are illustrative of the fact that, in representative democratic societies, the conservative nature of the 'vertical spatial anchor' is a reassuring reference for the stability and permanence of the power structure. Again, while this outcome is evident in both cases, the means by which this happens differ radically. In Denmark, this is achieved through the introduction of binding planning directives that sub-national levels should abide by, and also via the upward rescaling of metropolitan planning tasks and responsibilities in the case of Greater Copenhagen. In the case of Catalonia, due to Spain's legalist planning system, the processes of governance between the Spanish government and the government of the Catalan autonomous region (and also between the latter and the local governments) often end in a 'cul-de-sac'. What is relevant is the political 'instrumentalization' of regional planning in Catalonia as a first step for institutionalizing a new territorial structure.

Accordingly, from the perspective of public policy implementation, it thus seems more efficient for both the Danish and Catalan governments to maintain a 'stable' formal structure as a façade, and to 'act' within regulatory gaps to consolidate horizontal alliances when appropriate. This supports Foucault's argument that national governments will normally end up benefitting more from a 'capillary' structure (Foucault 1975). The 'double standard' exercised by national governments was most evident in the Catalan case where technical and political discourses amalgamated, for example in relation to the dual role of the new regions as instruments for budget redistribution and simultaneously as restructuring entities *vis-à-vis* the old Spanish provincial jurisdictions. In the Danish case, the double standard was somewhat less evident whereby, at present, Danish municipalities have seized almost total power in relation to spatial planning tasks and responsibilities.

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