

PREFACE

Inevitably, at a panel discussion not too long ago comparing planning cultures the discussion turned on the issue of globalisation. As a member of the panel, this author asked those in the audience who lived and/or worked in a country different from their country of origin to raise their hands. About half of the audience of well over one hundred academic teachers and researchers from all corners of the world, the present author included did so. Next he asked who had a spouse or partner from a country different from their country of origin to also raise their hands. About half of the audience, the present author included, raised their hands. This is the soft side of globalisation.

The soft side of globalisation is important. Exchanges, personal mobility, international romances, multi-culturalism and multi-lingualism (inevitably meaning non-native speakers struggling to keep up with native English speakers) are part of the academic scene, so much so that we can hardly imagine it to be otherwise. These are not entirely new phenomena, but they have become ever more prominent, relying on an ever more elaborate institutional infrastructure of exchange programmes, international journals, associations and the global conference industry.

It was at the AESOP (Association of European Schools of Planning) congress at Brno in the Czech Republic in July 2000 that the plan for this book was hatched. Martin De Jong gave a paper there and introduced the concept of 'institutional transplantation'. It struck a familiar chord with participants of the transnational planning track, familiar as they were with the problems of learning to know other countries, their planning systems and the context in which planning operates. Indeed, the problem of transplantation is universal in attempts to compare, evaluate and on that basis to intervene in administrative systems and policies.

In the same transnational track at Brno, Konstantinos Lalenis spoke of the successive waves of foreign institutional implants in Greece, where local government reform took a leaf out of the book of the French and, to a lesser extent, of the Germans. This was all to the best. A regular feature of AESOP conferences, the transnational planning track, co-chaired with enthusiasm by the present author, seeks to promote understanding of the issues involved. Obviously, what organisers of such a track hope for is that this goes beyond interesting intellectual exchanges and culminates in joint research. This is what has happened, with Martin and Kostas finding out that they not only could see eye to eye, but could also find the energy to embark on a joint project in this area of mutual interest of theirs. Virginie Mamadouh, a French political geographer working in Amsterdam, joined them later when the project expanded beyond the field of spatial planning.

Whoever is involved in transnational policy-making, or indeed in any kind of international collaboration, immediately comes up against the divergence between cultures. On a trivial level, as participants of international meetings are only too aware, styles of presentation, the length of time that speakers are expecting to be allowed to speak, the authority assumed by chairs, the modalities of discussion, contacts during coffee breaks, they all vary from culture to culture. For participants

of meetings, these may be fleeting impressions. For people working abroad and more generally for those in the business of institutional transplantation, be it as consultants or as researchers, sensitivity to differences of culture become of the essence of their effectiveness.

The literature in political science and planning has been greatly stimulated by reflection on the importance of administrative culture and by the constraints that it puts on any transfer of experiences or, as the authors of this volume have it, institutional transplantation. This has been the experience of Western experts going out on missions to the developing world. Their analyses were not always couched in terms of culture, but rather in terms of the decision, or the 'environment' and its impact on policy-making, and on how sensitivity to the context formed a precondition of applying their skills. Such experiences were an important stimulant for developing planning theory, which is largely about how the conduct of planning is influenced by its object and, importantly, by its context.

These days, with European integration an increasingly dominant aspect of our daily life and work experience, Europe provides an increasingly fertile ground for comparisons, with cultural variables once again amongst the factors that draw attention. As European integration progresses, transnational planning becomes a boom industry. The interaction of planners from various countries provides incentives for more comparative research and/or arenas for institutional transplantation. This is even more so where the formulation for common frameworks and policies in the European arena is concerned. Decision-making on the Council of Ministers and in the many committees operating in the backrooms of European integration involves representatives of EU member states entering into protracted negotiations. Their efforts to minimize the costs of integration and maximize the benefits that accrue to each lead to 'regulative competition'. However, in due course, as ideas and practices rub off on each other, creative syntheses emerge. Although only few of the case studies directly applied the concept of institutional transplantation to European integration, the concept is relevant to increasing our understanding, not only of bilateral, but of multi-lateral transfers as well. This makes this book all the more important.

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Experiences with the Transfer of Policy Institutions

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