

Chapter 2

Urban Welfare in Europe: A Comparative Approach

Abstract This chapter aims to analyse the different European approaches to the spatial dimension of the welfare state, i.e. the planning of urban facilities. Generally, there are two principal tendencies in European urban welfare planning. The first, what could be called the prescriptive approach, is one that is characterised by a strong regulatory and a land-based perspective. In Italy and Spain urban facilities are not measured beforehand but they are subjected to normative prescriptions. These prescriptions are based on mandatory minimum values calculated in square meters per inhabitant. In this approach, the concept of urban facilities is strongly linked to physical areas and hence to the principal needs of neighbourhoods, such as roads, sewage, parks, and parking lots. The second, which could be called the descriptive approach, is one that is less normative and treats urban facilities in relation to where they are, how convenient they are, and how they perform, emphasizing proximity, ease of access, adequate size, and desirable density. However, both the prescriptive and descriptive approach in urban welfare planning seem to need to be renovated in order to become more efficient, effective and sustainable planned and in order to give better answers to the radical transformations and innovations that have taken place recently in European cities due to the urban crisis. For this reason, we should plan urban facilities with a kind of logic that can meet the needs of communities and guarantee a higher level of satisfaction with the quality and quantity of facilities planned and provided in cities. Italian spatial planning is moving this way. Italian planners, therefore, have come to the conclusion that regulation alone is not enough under current conditions to guide collective decisions regarding land use, especially in reference to urban facilities.

Keywords European welfare state models • Right to the city • Urban welfare planning reform • Italian urban standards • Descriptive approach
Prescriptive approach • Spain • Italy • United Kingdom

2.1 The European Welfare State: Models and Features

“Welfare state” is a term that indicated a political, economic, and social system where the state takes on the promotion of the collective security and wellbeing of its citizens as its prerogative and responsibility. Among the many definitions, Wilensky (1975, p. 1) points out that “the essence of the welfare state is government-protected minimum standard of income, nutrition, health, housing, and education, assured to every citizen as a political right, not as charity.” It is precisely in this passage from charity to rights that there is the absolute novelty of state intervention, a passage that took place between the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century.

From a historical point of view, four phases can be identified in the development of the welfare state in Europe (Alber 1983):

- The phase of experimentation (c. 1870–1914), characterized by the emergence of massive national laws aiming at various types of social advancement, such as the introduction of welfare programs concerning health and pensions¹;
- The phase of consolidation (c. 1914–45), characterized by a better structured and consensual social policies²;
- The phase of expansion (c. 1945–75—the *Glorieuses Trente*), characterized by an increasing social expenditure no longer on risks and on the vulnerability of society, but on a fragmentary distribution of individual welfare compensations;
- The phase of decline (after 1975 in correspondence to the petroleum crisis and the collapse of the Bretton Woods system), characterized by the abandonment of the classic model of the welfare state³ in favor of alternative forms oriented to the redefinition of the role of the state and the presence of different actors with strong capacity and autonomy. In fact, the preceding universalistic model of welfare, based on the principle of universal protection regardless of the differences in the beneficiaries’ status, gave way to a different one where there was a

¹For more detail, see Flora (1985) and Dixon and Scheurell (2002).

²In this phase, social policy stopped being seen as a “gift” from on high to a lower level. It became a common opinion that social policy was useful for everyone and not only for the working class and the so-called deserving poor.

³It is possible to find two main fields in the international literature that can clarify this phenomenon (Pierson 2006). On the one hand, there are the great supporters of welfare state, who ascribe its crisis to a moment of economic and political recession. On the other hand, there are the detractors of welfare state who maintain that its crisis can be ascribed to its own natural structural characteristics. The most relevant position against the welfare state came from the neo-liberal movement and the theory of new rights. It is quite interesting to read the reconstruction made by Gamble (1988) of the reasons for the hostilities of the new rights theory against welfare state actions: “(1) its administrative and bureaucratic methods and allocation are inferior to those of the market, (2) it is morally objectionable for both the sponsors and the recipients of welfare, (3) it denied the consumers of welfare services any real choice and (4) despite the enormous resources devoted to it, it had failed either to eliminate poverty or to eradicate unjust inequalities of opportunity” (Pierson 2006, p. 41). For a further examination on this position, see also Glazer (1990) and Shapiro (2007).

transformation in the state's ways of operating and the roles of citizens (Greve 2015). In the light of this recent evolution, the welfare state can be defined today as “a social system whereby the state assumes primary, but not exclusive, responsibility for the welfare of its citizens—more specifically, those parts of the state apparatus involved in the direct provision or management of public services and benefits” (Gregory et al. 2009, p. 807). In fact, this present time of economic uncertainty and the new demands and political priorities of a multifaceted and diversified society (Donald et al. 2014) have transformed the welfare state and innovated the ways it approaches the topics of social services, fiscal policy and employment (Sirovátka and Greve 2014).

From the geopolitical point of view, the current European welfare systems are inspired by specific objectives and criteria. In fact, the different characteristics of the current welfare state models reflect the different historical, political, and economic experiences of the individual countries. Generally, the various systems differ mainly because of four reasons: the dimension and composition of public expenditures, institutional aspects, types of services delivered, and the mechanisms of finance foreseen. It is essential to emphasize the heterogeneity of the European welfare state models (Beblavý 2008) that are linked through open coordination strengthening their integration and cohesion.⁴ For the purpose of this book, a classification based on the expenses on social support is proposed as follows (Fig. 2.1):

- The Nordic Model (Denmark, Norway, Finland, Sweden and the Netherlands) characterized by the “egalitarianism” principle as the social benefits are distributed between all the members of society on the base of equality;
- The Anglo-Saxon Model (the United Kingdom and Ireland) identified by the provision of social benefits to all who are in need by the state welfare system, while the social funds are accumulated mainly by the citizens themselves;
- The Continental Model (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, and Luxemburg), which assumes that the social support is given to those who have already been represented on the Labour Market, and it fully depends on their social accumulation;
- The Southerner Model (Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Turkey) based on the principle that the family has the main role in supporting its socially unprotected members. Contrary to the other approaches, this model is not very efficient at decreasing poverty as welfare is mainly directed towards generous state-pensions and early retirements as a means to better work conditions;

⁴The method of open coordination is a strategy of intervention in the sector of social policies conceived of in order help European states in the processes of development of their own public policies. In short, this method calls for the drafting of EU guidelines to be translated into national and regional public policies, the definition of precise deadlines for the reaching of the goals, the introduction of common indicators in order to compare the best practices, the creation of periodical checks and evaluations.

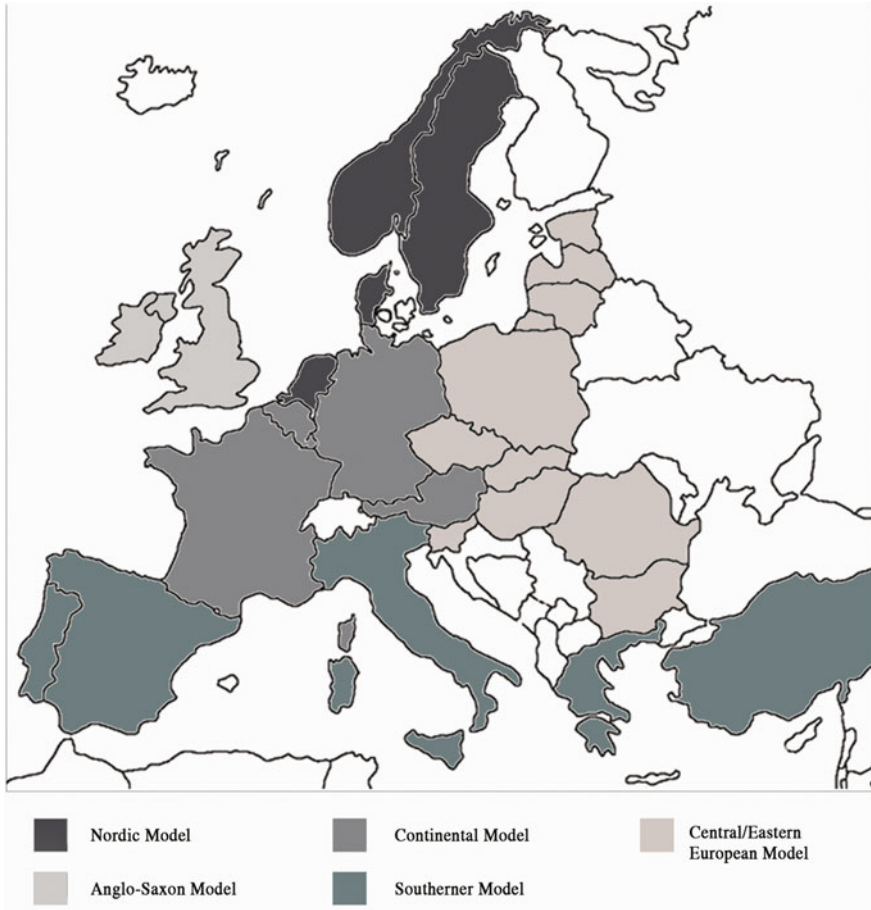


Fig. 2.1 Welfare state models in Europe (*Source* Author's elaboration)

- The Central/Eastern European Model (Baltic States, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, Visegrád States, and Slovenia) strongly based on the income redistribution to prevent poverty.

2.2 The Spatial Dimension of the Welfare State: Urban Welfare Planning

The change in the role and meaning of the welfare state has a strong impact on the issue of urban wellbeing in European cities. As a matter of fact, the cities are more and more characterized by growing social needs that are progressively specific and

by a sharp difference among subjects demanding urban facilities. The phase that began over the last few years aims at creating a new type of welfare that is more democratic and civil and, in contrast to an exclusively state setup, are based essentially on education, health, pension system, and social assistance (Karrer and Ricci 2003). According to this new approach to urban welfare policies, therefore, the territory has become the central element of the new practices of social planning, in which the city shapes up as a social construction in spatial form (Castells 1977) and a projection of the society on the territory (Brenner et al. 2012). In this perspective, space plays an important role, not just as an institutional presence, as a medium of participation. Territory, therefore, is not only seen as the space where individual rights and obligations within a polity are expressed, but as a place where citizenship and social rights are consequently redefined.

In the planning discipline, the guarantee of urban welfare became an expression of the more general *droit à la ville* (Lefebvre 1968), here defined as the universal right to take part in urban life in its wholeness and to play a complete role in a collective process of civilization (Mariani 1976), which has its reflection in the urban space being considered (Chiodelli 2013). Introduced at the end of the 1960s, the concept of “the right to the city” has been developed in a political context where the state had lost the role of moral arbiter for the entire community. Instead, a kind of negative citizenship emerged based on the conviction that the rights of citizens do not consist in their doing their best in pursuing the common good. Rather, they consist in focusing their attention on rules that do not involve any personal civil commitment (Mazza 2015). Thus, according to Lefebvre, the right to the city is contrasted to the progressive dissolution of the public city caused by spatial planning that is oriented towards a kind of exasperated functionalism, one that applies to rules of urban conditions that are foreign to daily life and that have not been differentiated in reference to social needs. In a nutshell, the right to the city means the right of citizens to use the city as a right ranking above the right of the exchange of properties and urban spaces.⁵

The theme of the relationship between space and wellbeing has always been at the center of the most important traditions of the modern spatial planning.⁶

⁵Originally, Marshall (1950) bases his idea of the right to the city on the satisfaction of a broad spectrum of needs. In contrast, Lefebvre recognizes the importance and the role of space in single social rights in order to construct a kind of universal right, the right to the city as the basis for the procedures of social transformation (Mazza 2015). In this perspective, Harvey (2012) underlines that the right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources. It is the right to change ourselves by changing the city. It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization. The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights.

⁶According to Secchi (2009), spatial planning studies constitute the ground for anticipated experimentation of what were to become the twentieth-century European welfare policies. There was much experimentation, including the late nineteenth-century intuitions of British idealism and of Patrick Geddes, whose contribution in relation to territorial government focuses on the notion of citizenship inserted within the perspective of the welfare state (Mazza 2012).

Generally, these traditions have outlined this relationship in terms of a concern for the conditions of salubrity of the city, of the quality of its spaces, and of the resources of its infrastructure and services that make urban life healthy, comfortable, secure and rich in opportunities (Bellaviti 2008). Thus, from a spatial point of view, the right to the city coincides with the moment of formal and substantial recognition of a new right of the citizen: the right to have a planned and livable city, in as much as such a city is endowed with an adequate number of urban facilities.⁷ From that moment on, the theme of the conditions of salubrity of the city became the guarantee, firstly, of a reserve of public areas to subtract from the real-estate-tax income and, secondly, the guarantee of widespread collective interests.⁸ It is precisely the respect of those rights that has allowed for the construction of a new model of organization and functional articulation of the city that is founded on the coexistence of the private and the public city.⁹ In this perspective, the public city is characterized by spaces and facilities, which are indistinctively and unconditionally exploitable by every citizen.

In short, therefore, the right to public spaces represents the right for individuals, as such and as members of society to:

- Have a city that is planned and endowed with all the urban facilities that make a city livable (Falco 1999);
- Take advantage of everything that the city can offer, in terms of possibilities of encounters, exchanges and use of city resources, contributing resources to these functions in proportion to their incomes (Salzano 2009);
- Participate in the governing of the city, expressing, orienting, and correcting the results of institutions as a potential site for reaching agreements (Fig. 2.2).

From a strictly physical point of view, urban facilities makes urban welfare material in terms of spaces available to society for the satisfaction of various social demands. From this perspective, cities become the places to invest in, despite the presence of situations of marginality, conflicts, and scarce quality (Madanipour 2004). Thus the topic of urban facilities becomes a cardinal point in the objective of promoting growth and creating welcoming environments (Schmidt and Németh

⁷As will be seen in Chap. 3, the legitimization of the right to the city coincides with the introduction of spatial-planning standards, a technical solution that was able to have a positive affect on the conditions of urban life. In metropolitan areas, the standards become concrete as the minimum quantities of urban facilities needed to guarantee a minimum level of urban civilization, conceded inalienably to every citizen (Astengo 1967).

⁸According to Buitelaar and Needham (2007, p. 1), “[Planning] is a ‘welfare-state’ activity, it requires heavy government involvement and expenditure, it is subject to the general criticism that governments act too slowly and unresponsively to ‘what people want’, it cannot be refined to take account of particular circumstances, so it is inevitably not very effective.”.

⁹According to Giallanella (2009), the dispute between the private and the public city reflects the conflict between the functional and physical city. In other words, between the place of relationships and exchanges, the physical city, and the city as experienced, the place of identity and of the individual’s belonging to collective society, guiding the transformation of the city under the sign of reciprocal compatibility.

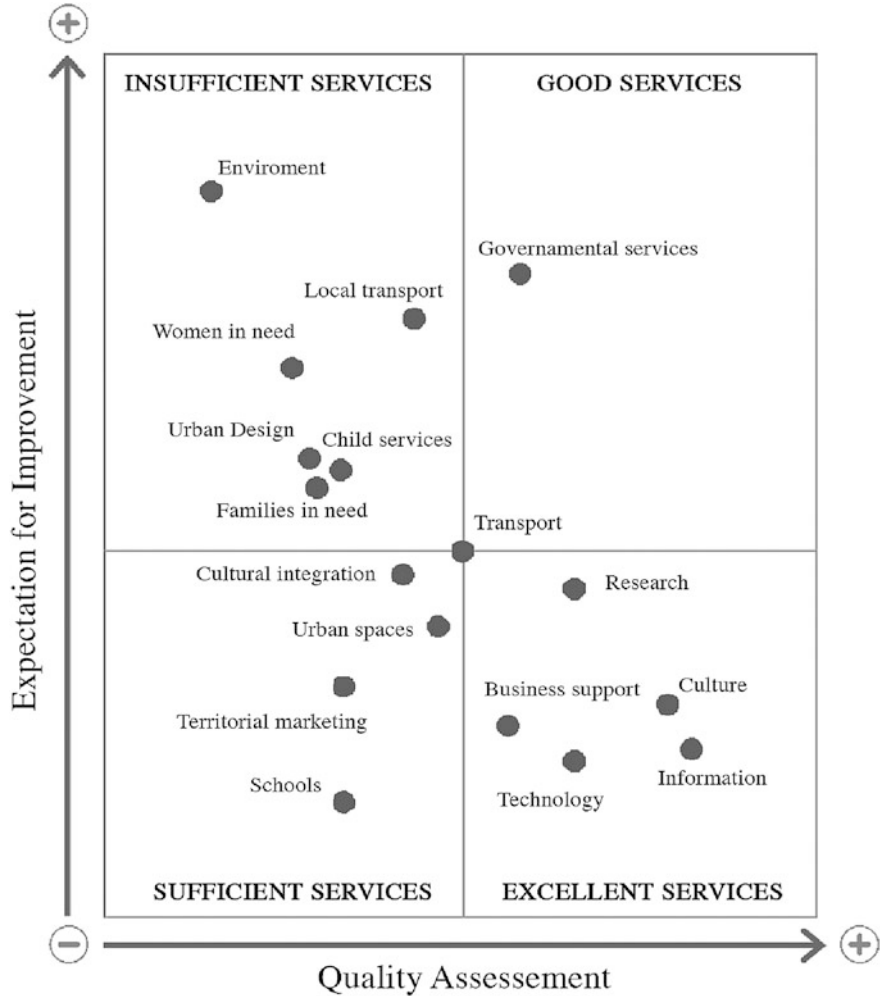


Fig. 2.2 Qualitative assessment of urban facilities in Milan (Source Author's elaboration based on Imberti 2011)

2010). In this process, therefore, cities are not merely physical supports but they constitute the places where problems and solutions become concrete (Curti 2003) and where spatial planning processes and responses to social needs intersect.

In operative terms, urban welfare planning enters into relationship with the identification of new demands for immaterial and material facilities and with the functional dimensioning of urban spaces in terms of the quality and security of the collective environment, accessibility, and exploitability over time. Thus a functioning city promotes the delivery of urban facilities, simplifying access to them, enabling them to be placed on sites that are appropriate, qualified, pleasant, and

comfortable for all users. The objective of the optimization of urban facilities is reached through the satisfaction of functions and social and esthetic needs, expressed on various levels. Hence, the city becomes the integrator of different urban facilities contributing to reinforcing urban welfare. They function adequately and are coherent with the needs expressed by the community and with other activities present in the city.

2.3 Two Approaches to Urban Welfare Planning in Europe

After the modern state took form, spatial planning in Europe developed gradually along lines that can be outlined in Table 2.1 which illustrates the resulting differences among systems of territorial government with their characteristic principles, techniques and procedures. In recent years, along with the process of European integration (Davies et al. 1989), the spatial planning field began to discover a growing interest in reading the various European spatial planning systems comparatively, according to multiple taxonomies (Nadin and Stead 2008).

We should read these classifications synoptically in respect to planning tools and the ways of assigning rights of use and land transformation. Thus, this will help us recognize the historical development of the two prevailing models. The first, defined “conformative”, refers to the imperative theory of zoning. The second,

Table 2.1 Features of the conforming, performing, and reformed conforming planning systems

	Conforming planning system	Performing planning system	Reformed conforming planning system
Principles	Hierarchy, dirigisme	Vertical and horizontal subsidiarity	Negotiation
Role of planning tools	Plan as a binding collective strategy	Plan as a non-binding collective strategy	Plan as a binding collective strategy
Nature of planning tools	Fusion of ‘spheres of interaction’	Distinct ‘spheres of interaction’	Both distinct and fusion of ‘spheres of interaction’
Legal effects	Incoherencies resolved according to conformance	Existing use rights in land until different public decision	Land-use rules approved after the negotiation
Advantages	Certainty	Flexibility	Adaptation
Disadvantages	Rigidity	Discretion, Public costs	Lengthiness
Political and technical responsibilities	Plan elaboration	Plan elaboration and projects evaluation	Projects support
In force	ES, FR, GR, IT	UK	DE, DK, NL, SE

Source Author’s elaboration from Janin Rivolin (2008)

defined “performative”, refers to the indicative theory of zoning (Faludi 1987). In short, there is “a more traditional and widespread one, aspiring to ‘conform’ single projects to a collective strategy; and there is a different and less institutionalized one, promoting those projects capable of ‘performing’ a collective strategy” (Janin Rivolin 2008, p. 167).

Nevertheless, several northern and central European countries progressively changed their institutional organizations over the course of the twentieth century in order to make up for the excessive rigidity of the conformative model and to approach the performative model (Muñoz Gielen and Tasan-Kok 2010). Hence there are currently three systems of spatial planning (Table 2.1):

- The conforming planning system (Spain, France, Greece and Italy¹⁰), characterized by binding zoning, so that the strategy for urban transformation is inserted into a land-use plan. This plan assigns the rights of land use and transformation preventively;
- The performing planning system (United Kingdom), characterized by indicative zoning, so that the strategy for urban transformation is transferred into a non-binding land-use plan and the rights of land use and transformation are assigned in the context of urban projects;
- The reformed conforming planning system (Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden), characterized by zoning that is binding. Unlike the pure conformative model, this zoning is no longer preventive, but is done afterwards. In this way, the strategy of urban transformation can be used as a basis for the negotiation of land-use-and-transformation rights, which are binding after the land-use plans are established.

The sharp difference between the conformative and performative systems is also evident in the interpretation of urban welfare planning. Analogous to the original models of spatial planning, urban facility planning in Europe has also been treated with two prevailing approaches, which are, in practice, articulated with specific characteristics and differentiated impacts. These two approaches are distinct both because they are inserted into different national spatial planning systems and because they assign different roles to spatial planning tools, which can be summed up in the different meanings attributed to the term “standard” in relation to the urban facilities planning.¹¹

¹⁰As evident in urban facility planning, the Italian planning model in several Italian regions is now in a state of transition towards a performative model. In this classification, Italy was nevertheless located in the conformative model because the general principle of the National Law 1150/1942 is that of fixed mandatory quantities of urban facilities and all the Italian regional applications derive from this law.

¹¹The discussion on the use of standards in urban planning generally falls into three categories. First, the descriptive-directive approach consists in guidelines that compare standards used in different places and then advocates or prescribes their application. Second, the evaluative-normative approach evaluates the effects of standards on urban development. Third, the historical-societal approach describes the contexts in which standards have been developed and applied (Ben-Joseph 2012).

The term “standard” is generally defined as “a rule, principle, or means of judgment or estimation”. It might also be seen as “a definite level of excellence, attainment, wealth [...] or a definite degree of any quality, viewed as a prescribed object of endeavor or as the measure of what is adequate for some purpose” (OED 2015). In urban facility planning, although varying in each country, standards are defined as technical solutions that could influence urban life in metropolitan areas positively, guaranteeing a basic level of urban civilization.

Actually, standards are interpreted in two different ways:

- As a level of excellence or a defined degree of any quality, viewed and described object of endeavor which is adequate for some purpose (Stuart Chapin and Kaiser 1985). In this perspective, standards are evaluated depending on location (such as proximity, ease of access, and adequate size), and generally represented a situation that is intermediate between the minimum standard and the optimal standard. In addition, there are convenience standards (such as close proximity, convenient driving range, and easy walking distance), which are expressions of adaptability to the local needs of the various municipal circumstances. Finally, there are performance standards, focused on desired results, leaving open the means for their achievement; or
- As a series of indications that prescribe minimum requirements for the physical environment for the wellbeing of communities and society at large (Ben-Joseph 2005).

These different interpretations of the term “standard” led to two different European urban-welfare planning approaches proposed in this book as follows (Fig. 2.3).

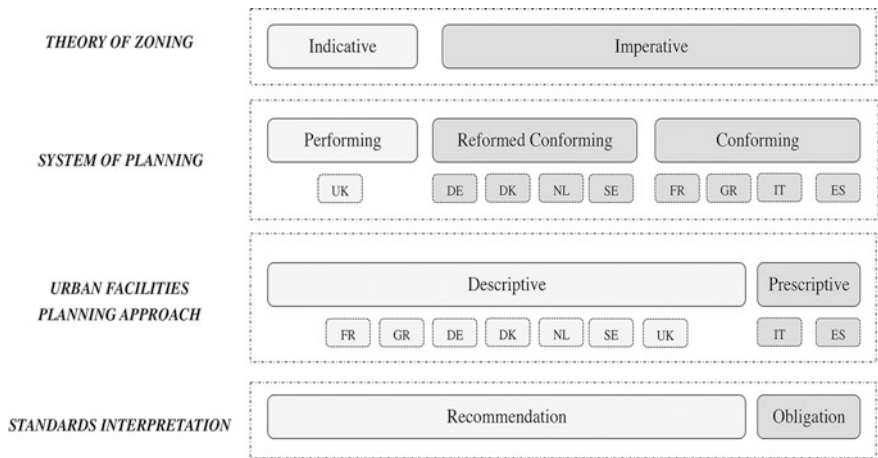


Fig. 2.3 Relationships among theories of zoning, systems of planning, urban facility planning approaches and standard interpretations

The first approach, the “prescriptive approach”, interprets urban facility planning as an authoritative activity in which the laws of territorial government bind the areas of urban services according to a defined minimum value of public spaces. This approach is currently followed in Italy, with some regional attempts at innovation, and in Spain. It interprets urban facilities as levels of the obligatory supply of urban welfare, under which the normative “standard” cannot be considered satisfied (Falco 1987).

On the contrary, the “descriptive approach”¹² interprets the “standard” as a minimum term of reference, under which urban livability cannot be considered to be satisfied. As opposed to the prescriptive approach, the descriptive approach is widespread all over Europe. In the United Kingdom for instance, the “standard” is not interpreted as an undifferentiated normative tool, but as a set of design rules that define minimum quantities and densities of inhabitation in relation to the localization of a development project (Gaeta et al. 2013).

Thus the classification proposed here sees the planning of urban facilities in Europa today as characterized by two prevailing approaches explained by their different “direction of fit” (Moroni and Lorini 2016). The first is less normative and treats urban facilities in relation to where they are, how convenient they are, and how they perform, emphasizing proximity, ease of access, adequate size, and desirable density. The second is characterized by a strong regulatory and a land-based perspective.

2.3.1 *The Descriptive Approach: United Kingdom*

In the United Kingdom, the tradition of British law has been translated into plans that are strongly flexible. Basically, the building and spatial planning regulations consist only in administrative acts. They are not properly legal acts and do not automatically imply any rights to build. In fact, planning decisions are made at the local level based on multidisciplinary considerations. The priority is focused on development initiatives, both in the indicative and structural phases and in the operative and localized phase. This developing approach, defined “Growth-Dependent Planning”¹³ (Rydin 2013), assumes that the demand for new development is fundamental. It seeks to reap social and environmental benefits from that development, and actively encourages and promotes market-led development.

¹²This classification refers to the ontological distinction between what is (facts) and what ought to be (values). In this perspective, the descriptive statements are related to theoretical statements, while the prescriptive statements are related to the practical ones (Hare 1952). See also Alexander (2012).

¹³National Planning Policy Framework embeds Growth Dependent Planning: “Development means growth. We must accommodate the new ways by which we will earn our living in a competitive world Our lives, and the places in which we live them, can be better, but they will certainly be worse if things stagnate.” (2012, p. i).

From a normative point of view, the British planning system is based on a two-tier system, which distinguishes the tasks of supra-local areas from those that can be enacted at the local level through specific projects and programs (Rydin 2011). In this perspective, local authorities have the task of identifying a core strategy—i.e. a general strategy of growth and development—to be supported subsequently by more detailed programs for specific areas. This approach allows planners to interact with more dimensions, linking spatial planning to eco-systemic functions, participative activities, local community involvement, and the development of political debate. The reform of the National Planning Policy Framework in 2012 also re-affirms the role of local and neighborhood plans, to be understood as design plans and starting-out points for the process of planning and development strategies. They are supported, therefore, by supplementary planning guidance in order to check and monitor the economic, social, and environmental impact of urban projects. Finally, in the first phases of the process the local plan maintains the role of the main guide while the project introduces planning-obligation measures.

On the side of urban facility planning, the United Kingdom offers a singular combination of centralization and flexibility (Cremaschi 2003). This methodological setup originated in the County of London Plan (Abercrombie and Forshaw 1943) and in the following Greater London Plan (Abercrombie 1945). As Mazza (2011) points out, in those years the problem of London was to give a shape and functionality back to the immeasurable development of its settlements, to do this by reconstructing the texture of a community in the entire urban region. The Greater London Plan assigned spatial rights in relation to declining densities of inhabitation¹⁴ in the four zones of the urban region, orienting the definitive zoning in the local-level plans (Table 2.2). Thus the standards are homogenous at a local level, while the spatial rights are assigned differently according to the characteristics of the local communities and types of settlements.

In the present British planning system, the National Planning Policy Framework¹⁵ indicates urban welfare policies at a national level without any localized prescriptions. Meanwhile, the local level protects the free areas—the green belts, parks and areas of environmental protection—and promotes low-cost residential housing. In operative terms, the quantitative standards are supported on

¹⁴The standards that Abercrombie set up determine the gross densities—i.e. those calculated in respect to the entire available surface area, which vary from 50 to 140 inhabitants per hectare—and the net residential densities, which vary from 75 to 250 inhabitants per hectare (Hall et al. 1973).

¹⁵As outlined in the NPPF (2012), good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, it is indivisible from good planning, and it should contribute positively to making places better for people. It is important to plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all development, including individual buildings, public and private spaces and wider area-development schemes. Planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments: (i) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area; (ii) establish a strong sense of place, creating attractive and comfortable places to live; (iii) optimize the potential of the site to accommodate development; and (iv) create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion.

Table 2.2 Standards for a residential neighborhood of 10,000 inhabitants

Rings	Total land (acres)	Residential (acres)	Open spaces (acres)	Other uses (acres)	Gross residential density (inhabitants/acre)
Inner urban (1)	180	100	40	40	55
Inner urban (2)	210	100	70	40	48
Inner urban (3)	253	133	70	50	40
Suburban (1)	253	133	70	50	40
Suburban (2)	330	200	70	60	30
Suburban (3)	360	200	100	60	28
Green belt (1)	360	200	100	60	28
Green belt (2)	503	333	100	70	20
Outer country (1)	360	200	100	60	28
Outer country (2)	503	333	100	70	20

Source Author's elaboration from Abercrombie (1945, p. 114)

local levels and are complementary to the qualitative demands in terms of accessibility—i.e. distance and costs.

In conclusion, urban facilities in the United Kingdom are identified in the local-level development plans as the suitable densities of open spaces—green areas, playgrounds, areas for public buildings and services—in relation to built-up areas. Thus the UK approach does not consist in a minimum dimensioning of areas for services but rather a proportioning oriented towards the principles of settlement density, fine spatial-planning design, and “just sustainability”¹⁶ (Agyeman 2013).

2.3.2 *The Prescriptive Approach: Spain*

With the constitutional reform of 1978, spatial planning in Spain began to be characterized by a decisive decentralization and a clear sharing of the powers of territorial organization and housing rights between the *Comunidades autónomas*,¹⁷ which furnish the guidelines for territorial government, and the municipalities (Betancor and García-Bellido 2001).

¹⁶The “Just sustainability” approach recognizes the importance of addressing local inequality and it aspires to improve the quality of life, meet the needs of present and future generations, and help people to live within ecosystem limits.

¹⁷Since 1978, in Spain there are 17 *Comunidades autónomas*: Andalusia, Aragon, Asturias, Canary Islands, Cantabria, Castilla La Mancha, Castille and Leon, Catalonia, Ceuta, Valencia, Extremadura, Galicia, Balearic Islands, La Rioja, Madrid, Melilla, Murcia, Navarre and the Basque Country.

Currently, the overriding national legislation consists in Royal Legislative Decree 7/2015 (*Ley de Suelo y Rehabilitación Urbana*) and Royal Decree 4/2000 (*Ley sobre Seguridad Social de los Funcionarios Civiles del Estado*). The Spanish planning system is based on two founding principles (Saravia Madrigal 2003):

- The planning tool at the local level is the municipal land-use plan (*Plan General de Ordenación Municipal*) that establishes the complete and detailed organization of all the urban land areas and, generally, of lands able to be urbanized for urban expansion;
- The territory is classified as consisting of consolidated urban lands (*Suelo Urbano*), lands zoned for development (*Suelo Urbanizable*) and lands not zoned for development (*Suelo No-Urbanizable*). The non-zoned lands are then divided into areas that correspond to partial plans (*Plan Parcial*), which are “responsible for developing a specific sector of land zoned for building delimited by the municipal plan” (González Pérez 2007, p. 39).

In urban facilities planning, Spain is the only country in the European Union—along with Italy as will be extensively illustrated in Chaps. 3 and 4—where the minimum quantities of areas designated for public services are regulated by specific laws (Falco 2003).

Standards for planning were introduced in Spanish law for the first time in 1924. They were to find a partial application in the *Ley de Suelo* of 1975¹⁸ and full development in the *Reglamento de Planeamiento* of 1978. This defines the minimum values of areas to designate for parks, public gardens, sports areas, cultural and educational centers, services for public and social interests (religious centers, social and health assistance centers, and social facilities), and areas for parking (Table 2.3).

This theoretical setup is still in effect today because the legislation of the *Comunidades autónomas* did not make any substantial changes in the national level legislative model (Saravia Madrigal 2003). As in Italy, the general principle that guides the planning of urban facilities in Spain is that every property owner must urbanize the areas of transformation at his or her own expense, must give areas that correspond to urban facilities fixed in the legal standards, and give a quantity of areas to the city that corresponds to 10% of the right to build fixed by the general plan. Even the present *Ley de Suelo* recognizes the role of public authority to develop and improve the quality and functionality of the resources, infrastructures, and public spaces for all the citizens, encouraging a system of urban welfare that is more efficient in economic and environmental terms.

In addition, there had been a lack of impetus for experimentation in their regional applications on the part of the *Comunidades autónomas* (Beltran Aguilar 2001). Nevertheless, two recently formulated topics have emerged, topics that had been ignored on the national level:

¹⁸The law obliges all cities to respect a maximum density of 75 housing units per hectare and to prove 5 m² per inhabitant for the general system of open spaces on the local level.

Table 2.3 Standards for services in residential areas (m²/housing unit)

Units	Gardens	Sports	Nursery schools	Elementary schools	Secondary schools	Sport parks	Retail	Social equipment	Parking spaces (space/100 m ²)
Up to 250	15	3	—	10	—	—	2	1	
Up to 500	15	3	2	10	—	6	1	3	1
Up to 1000	15	6	2	10	—	6	2	4	1
Between 1000 and 2000	15	6	2	10	—	8	3	6	1
Between 2000	15	6	2	10	4	8	4	6	1
More than 5000	15	6	2	10	4	8	4	6	1

Source Author's elaboration from *Ley sobre Régimen del Suelo y Ordenación Urbana* (1978)

- The quantity of housing units for public residential housing is determined as a percentage of the quantity or as the residential capacity of the city being designed (for example, 15% of the new residential capacity in Navarre or 6 m² per housing unit in Madrid); and
- The index of variety that foresees the mix of land uses in all urban sectors oriented to criteria of urban sustainability.

To sum up, urban facility planning in Spain consists in a body of traditions, scientific research, and empiricism (Pérez 1998), even though it is inserted in a system of spatial planning linked to complex legal mechanisms with strong traditional territorial implications.

2.4 Some First Considerations on Urban Welfare Planning in Europe

Both the descriptive and prescriptive approaches in urban facility planning seemingly need to be completely overhauled in order to achieve more efficient, effective and sustainable planning models, ones that can better respond to the radical transformations and innovations that have taken place recently in European cities.

Table 2.4 outlines the points of contact and difference between the English descriptive approach and the Spanish (and Italian) prescriptive approach.

In fact, European cities today are generally being hit by profound changes in settlement processes and, in particular, by the depletion of consistent amounts of outdated needs for urban facilities, and by the stop in demographic dynamics that has cancelled any forecasts of growth. In other words, there is a tendency towards the disappearance of quantifiable needs as well as the emergence of an immaterial demand for quality. In fact, these make exclusively quantitative urban welfare policies inadequate. So, in this sense, we seemingly can no longer follow the principle of the prescriptive approach. The reason is that the prescriptive approach binds areas designated for public use in order to satisfy needs. However, these needs were ones that were generated in the plan in reference to the legally mandatory minimum relations. Nevertheless, there are new paradigms for facilities planning: growth control and the zoning for containment and renovation on the local level. On the other hand, the descriptive approach, which applies and defines urban welfare through homogeneous and precise zones, does not take account of the need for integrating urban facilities in cities that are increasingly polycentric and therefore require going beyond the rigid separation of functions.

The model of the city has changed and, therefore, the needs have changed that urban welfare must meet. Urban welfare policies have been traditionally dimensioned or proportioned in relation to the settled or theoretical inhabitants in certain urban areas. Today these policies have to be subdivided into parameters according to the particular needs of new ranges of users—the elderly, low-income population, young people, and city users. In addition, it is the city itself that expresses new

Table 2.4 Similarities and differences between descriptive and perspective approaches

	Descriptive approach	Prescriptive approach	
	United Kingdom	Spain	Italy
Normative introduction	County of London Plan (1943) Greater London Plan (1944)	<i>Ley de Suelo</i> (1975) <i>Reglamento de Planeamiento</i> (1978)	<i>Legge</i> 765/1967 <i>D.I.</i> 1444/1968
Normative level	Local	National–Regional	National–Regional
Tool	Development plan	<i>Reglamento de Planeamiento</i> (1978)	<i>D.M.</i> 1444/1968
Standard interpretation	Proportional	Dimensional	Dimensional
Fixing dimensions	In relation to the density of inhabitants	In relation to the number of housing units	Undifferentiated
Preventive dimensioning	No	Yes	Yes
Types of services	Open spaces	Instruction Community interest Green areas Parking	Instruction Community interest Green areas Parking
Recent orientations	Community-based approach	Public residential housing Index of variety	Qualitative approach Thematic plan Efficient management

Source Author's elaboration

needs, such as the achievement of the safety of society and the fight against environmental risks. Hence, in this sense, urban welfare takes on the task of answering a growing demand for prosperity, to be understood not only in quantitative terms but also in terms of satisfaction—i.e. happiness and the collective value of living together able to mobilize the sense of belonging and citizenship.

Lastly, there is a problem in the definitions and in the local tax systems. We may assume that urban welfare must think of urban facilities as they are being performed. Welfare must be regulated to the city as a system rather than calibrated to a certain part of the city. If we assume this, the economic effect of urban facilities must be put into proportion with the expected impact or with the effects in relation to indicators of urban, environmental and social quality that are shared by the local community. This passage has a strong impact on local tax systems, for example, in Italy. It implies that surface areas should no longer be indicated to be put aside. Rather, planners should indicate the number of potential users, the costs of the facilities delivered, the degree of vulnerability or weakness of the populations served, and the value of the territories designated for environmental functions.

In conclusion, the traditional approaches to urban welfare planning need to begin to operate in cities in a way that they can have a deep effect on cities' capacity to respond to a variety of demands—i.e. economic and financial demands, demands for bettering quality of life, and demands to focus on new environmentally sustainable and socially sensitive economies. For this reason, we should plan urban facilities with a kind of logic that can meet the needs of communities and guarantee a higher level of satisfaction with the quality and quantity of facilities planned and provided in cities. Italian spatial planning is moving this way as Italian planners have come to the conclusion that, under current conditions, this type of regulation alone is not enough to guide collective decisions regarding land use.

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