

## ARTICLES

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### **THE NORTH EAST ADRIATIC REGION: TERRITORIAL COOPERATION AND THE ROLE OF PLANNING SYSTEMS AND CULTURES**

**Abstract.** This paper aims to analyse the influence of planning systems and cultures on the process of territorial cooperation in the North East Adriatic region. Based on recent theoretical works on planning systems and cultures in Europe and on-site research, the paper proves that while territorial cooperation in the North East Adriatic is hampered by the existing differences in the institutional setting and formal structures of planning in the Croatian, Italian and Slovenian parts of the region, it is facilitated by the region's specific cultural context. In this line, the paper argues that cooperation processes in large cross-border regions could be studied only under consideration of the specific regional conditions and planning cultural context.

**Keywords:** territorial and cross-border cooperation, planning systems and cultures, North East Adriatic.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Over the past centuries, the political borders in the North East Adriatic shifted continuously, as for most of the time this region was caught between rivalling powers. Starting from the Republic of Venice up until the end of the Cold War and Yugoslavia's dissolution, the political map of the region was newly shaped almost every few decades. Yet, despite the significant migration streams the region has

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faced as a result of the experienced changes, it is characterized by strong social relations and cultural ties that stretch across borders and endure the ever-changing political circumstances (Bufon, 2002, p. 177). Today, the North East Adriatic is tri-national and covers Istria County in Croatia, the autonomous region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia in Italy and Slovenia's Obalno-Kraška statistical region (hereafter referred to as South Primorska, the official denomination introduced by the respective Regional Development Agency).

Throughout the decades, the different parts of the North East Adriatic have faced similar challenges and problems. In an attempt to address these, the local stakeholders have initiated new cooperation activities in the form of short-term cross-border projects or informal knowledge transfer and got involved in inter-regional cooperation schemes such as the Forum of Adriatic and Ionian Cities. In recent years, the need for joint efforts has even increased due to the cross-border character of many current environmental, economic and social issues that stretch beyond administrative borders and require common solutions (see e.g. Bartol *et al.*, 2004; EUNETMAR, 2014; RDA South Primorska, 2007). This, together with the growing competition between cities and urban areas for material, financial and human resources, strengthens the role of cooperation in larger cross-border and transnational territories. Cooperation helps these territories to increase their competitiveness and position themselves in growing Europe. This is particularly, it is particularly relevant for the North East Adriatic, especially after the accession of Slovenia and Croatia to the European Union in 2004 and 2013.

Despite the efforts and initiatives that have been undertaken, the cooperation in the North East Adriatic still proves to be intermediate when compared to other border regions in Europe (such as the Danish-Swedish Öresund region or the German-Swiss-French Basel region). Taking this assumption as a starting point, the current paper aims to study the cooperation process in the North East Adriatic, to identify the main characteristics, differences and similarities of the planning systems and planning cultures of the three involved countries and to analyse to what extent these influence the cooperation in the region. The results of the analysis are expected to differ depending on which of both terms – 'planning systems', the formal structures and practices of planning, or 'planning cultures' that embrace also the socio-cultural and socio-political context planning emanates from – is used. The North East Adriatic promises to be an interesting case study with regard to planning systems and cultures since the dynamics and transformation it has experienced over the last decades have led to significant differences in the administrative systems of the individual countries while, at the same time, the region is characterized and tied together by strong socio-cultural interdependencies.

The current paper follows a descriptive and interpretative case study approach and uses qualitative strategy of inquiry. This is based on literature review, documentary analysis and expert interviews with representatives of the

Regional Development Agencies of Istria County and South Primorska, the Department of Self-Governing and Spatial Planning of Istria County, the Department of Economic Development of Koper Municipality and the Central European Initiative in Trieste. The paper is structured in four main sections. Following this introduction, section two provides an overview of existing theoretical works and current discussions on the topic of planning systems and planning cultures and sets the framework for the further research. In section three, the gathered theoretical insights are applied to the North East Adriatic region. These, along with empirical evidence from the region, allow analysis of the planning systems and cultures in the area and examination of their impact on the current state of regional cooperation. The paper concludes with a discussion on the role of planning systems and cultures for the future development of the North East Adriatic cooperation process and with identification of areas for further research.

## **2. TOWARDS A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF PLANNING SYSTEMS AND CULTURES**

Previous theoretical and empirical research on territorial cooperation has identified a plethora of different internal and external factors that influence the cooperation process and its outcomes (see e.g. Knippschild, 2008; Perkmann, 2003). The available evidence proves that the state of cooperation varies from region to region. A possible explanation for the obvious differences might be sought in the specific institutional and administrative settings and the different cultural contexts cooperation is rooted in. Drawing on this expectation, the current paper seeks to build on previous research by studying in what way planning systems and planning cultures influence territorial cooperation. For the purposes of the paper, the characteristics and different concepts related to both terms will be studied. These shall provide a theoretical framework for the subsequent analysis of the planning systems and cultures in the North East Adriatic.

Recent years have seen the development of various concepts on planning systems that attempt to categorize national systems according to their specific administrative and legal characteristics. In this paper, three theoretical models will be presented – the concept of families of nations by Newman and Thornley (1996) that analyses the administrative and legal systems of European countries by their historical roots; the model of Balchin and Sýkora (1999) that adds to Newman and Thornley's concept further information on the degree of devolution in each country; and the 'EU Compendium of Spatial Planning Systems and Policies' (hereafter referred to as Compendium) by the European Commission (CEC, 1997) that provides a modular system for comparison of planning

systems and can be adapted to more recent developments due its character of variable modules. In addition to these three models, which are predominantly focused on the structures and practices of spatial planning, the ‘Culturised Planning Model’ (CPM) by Knieling and Othengrafen (2009) will be studied. This provides a framework that, in the sense of a process analysis, links the planning systems to their respective cultural context and understands planning systems as culturally influenced.

There exist significant variations in the national legislative and administrative systems in Europe. These generate different approaches to planning in the individual countries. Recognising the differences and identifying main similarities of the planning systems, Newman and Thornley (1996) created a division of countries into legal and administrative types and developed a model of five different families of nations – British, Napoleonic, Germanic, Scandinavian and Eastern European family. As illustrated in table 1, each of the families has its particular roots and characteristics and there are significant contrasts between the planning systems of the countries of different types.

Balchin and Sýkora (1999) have modified Newman and Thorney’s model insofar as they additionally provide information on how regionalized each of the countries in Western and Central Europe are today. The authors distinguish between federal, transition and unitary states, sub-dividing the latter in four different categories according to their level of centralisation, the allocation of planning powers to the different administrative levels and the role of the respective planning instruments in unitary states with centralised planning powers, with planning powers devoted to the regions, with planning powers substantially devoted to the municipalities and with planning powers substantially devoted to the regions. Despite being more detailed, this classification still has a major shortcoming, namely the consideration of all former socialist countries as ‘transition states of East Central Europe’ which suggests a homogeneity that in fact does not exist.

A further framework for the analysis of planning systems in Europe has been provided in the Compendium by CEC (1997). The Compendium embraces the 15 EU Member States of 1997 and proposes the belonging of the European planning systems to one of the four approaches – regional economic approach, comprehensive integrated approach, land use management or urbanism tradition (see table 2). It could be argued that, since this typology is based on a sort of a modular system of universally valid variables (such as the type of planning at the national and regional level or the role of the private and public sectors), it seems to be better applicable to study the spatial planning traditions of the former socialist Member States of today’s EU-28 (CEC, 1997). Yet, it should be kept in mind that the spatial planning in some countries could bear characteristics of more than one of the above mentioned approaches and that regions within one country might show own particular characteristics (Tosics *et al.*, 2010).

Table 1. Administrative and planning systems in Europe according to the Newman and Thorney's families of nation

British family (Britain, Ireland)	Legal style and administrative system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– strict distinction between central and local governments</li> <li>– scope of powers of local authorities defined by the central government – local authorities seen as implementers of central government policies</li> <li>– limited autonomy of the local authorities – legal and financial constraints set by the central government, supervisory role of the central government, limited local taxation and finances</li> <li>– political committees as central administration structure of local government, limited role of mayors</li> <li>– relative large units of government – focus on efficiency of service delivery</li> </ul>
	Spatial planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– central control on local planning decisions and on their conformity to national guidelines</li> <li>– separation of different planning functions (plan making, land development and control) in different departments of the planning office</li> </ul>
Napoleonic (France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Italy, Portugal, Belgium, Spain, Greece)	Legal style and administrative system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– considerable internal variations, membership in the family more indicative of historical traditions and developments than of contemporary characteristics</li> <li>– high degree of centralization, yet recent transformations leading to stronger representation of the local authorities and in some states (Belgium, Spain) even to federal structures of local governments</li> <li>– local administration based on local communes and existence of a high number of local authorities</li> </ul>
	Spatial planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– variations in the planning systems of the countries – systemic approach with clearly described procedures and tasks in France and the Netherlands, federal elements in the planning systems of Belgium and Spain, fragmentation and complexity in the structures and procedures in Italy and Greece</li> <li>– tendency towards national code of planning regulations and hierarchy of plans</li> <li>– planning increasingly taking place between arrangements for horizontal and vertical cooperation</li> </ul>

Germanic (Germany, Austria, Switzerland)	Legal style and administrative system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– clear division of powers and responsibilities between different levels of government, the central state shares powers with the regions, yet complex system of allocation of responsibilities and powers</li> <li>– local authorities have general power over the affairs of their communities</li> </ul>
	Spatial planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– strong national framework with strictly formulated planning regulations</li> <li>– strong regional level of planning with own laws, plans and arrangements for dealing with the counties and communes leading to variations in the planning processes of regions</li> </ul>
Scandinavian (Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland)	Legal style and administrative system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– high degree of decentralization and long history of local self-government</li> <li>– self-government seen as a cornerstone of constitution</li> <li>– strong relationships between central government and regions (central government often with an own agency at the regional level)</li> </ul>
	Spatial planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– decentralized system with minimum involvement of the national level in the planning, comparatively weak regional level and strong local level focused on municipalities</li> <li>– high degree of similarity between the members of this family</li> </ul>
Eastern European	Legal style and administrative system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– considerable internal variations between the countries, especially after the latest EU enlargements</li> <li>– ongoing processes of transition of the states towards decentralization under the influence of different families</li> </ul>
	Spatial planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– the countries still in a process of establishment of a system appropriate to their particular situation based on approaches existing in the other families</li> </ul>

Source: authors' own elaboration based on Newman and Thorney (1996), pp. 27–75 and Tosics *et al.* (2010), pp. 27–33.

Emphasizing the fact that planning, development processes and decision-making are strongly rooted in cultural contexts, Knieling and Othengrafen (2009) add to the traditional concepts of planning systems a 'Culturised Planning Model' (CPM). This seeks to link planning systems to their respective cultural context and takes planning culture as the subculture shared by the planning community. The model defines planning cultures as the common 'how to' of planning, which

Table 2. Traditions and main characteristics of spatial planning in Europe according to the EU Compendium of Spatial Planning Systems and Policies

Regional economic planning approach (France, Portugal, partly Germany)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– focus on wide social and economic objectives for the achievement of equalities between different regions</li> <li>– central role for the national government in national and regional development, in managing development pressures and public sector investments</li> <li>– existence of national, regional (focus on infrastructure and zoning of economic activities and the achievement of balanced development in all fields) and local plans to execute the regional ones</li> </ul>
Comprehensive integrated approach (The Netherlands, the Nordic countries, Germany, Austria)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– systematic and formal hierarchy of plans from the national to the local level with a stronger focus on spatial than economic development</li> <li>– horizontal and vertical coordination between sectors and levels</li> <li>– political commitment, mature administrative system, responsive planning institutions and public sector investments as important requirements in this approach</li> <li>– two separate sub-categories – the Nordic (focus on a rational planning approach and public sector investment, major role of local authorities in planning, yet, these share some responsibilities with the central government) and the Federal (much stronger role of federal administrative structures in decision making and planning implementation and stronger role of regional governments)</li> </ul>
Land use management (UK, partly Ireland and Belgium)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– planning closely related to controlling the change and use of land through zoning laws</li> <li>– focus on sustainable growth and development</li> <li>– local authorities mainly responsible for planning works, yet control by the central administration through supervision of the planning system or through setting of policy objectives</li> <li>– existence of land use plans, often absence of plans on the higher levels</li> </ul>
'Urbanism' tradition (Mediterranean countries)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– strong relation to architecture and urban design</li> <li>– focus on the local level and regulation through strict zoning and building control, spatial plans on a higher level of less importance</li> <li>– systems less effective in controlling development, tendency towards stricter planning control</li> </ul>

Source: authors' own elaboration based on CEC (1997), pp. 36–37 and Tosics *et al.* (2010), pp. 34–36.

can be seen as the sum of values, beliefs, rules, etc. associated with planning and shared by those involved in it. It proposes the distinction between three different dimensions. Firstly, the dimension of the ‘planning artefacts’ that consist of the highly visible and easily identifiable outcomes as well as of the structures and processes of planning. These include, for instance, the planning instruments and procedures for communication and participation as well as different planning products such as regional development strategies, urban design plans, etc. Secondly, the dimension of ‘planning environment’ that amongst others accounts for the values and traditions in planning, the general objectives and principles of planning as well as the administrative system and economic structures that set the context for each planning system. Thirdly, the dimension of the ‘societal environment’ which can be described as the general societal context from which the planning environment emerges. It comprises elements such as the perception and acceptance of planning in individual contexts as well as the socio-economic and socio-political models existing in them (Knieling and Othengrafen, 2009, p. 43). For the purpose of this paper and the analysis, the CPM is simplified insofar as the ‘planning artefacts’ dimension focuses solely on strategic planning, the ‘planning environment’ dimension looks at how developed governance structures are (in the sense of vertical and horizontal integration of the administration and the involvement of private stakeholders) and the ‘societal environment’ refers to the political context of planning since the 1990s.

The presented models provide a theoretical framework for analysis of planning systems and planning cultures in Europe. In the following, this will be used as a basis for analysis of the planning systems and cultures in the Croatian, Italian and Slovenian parts of the North East Adriatic region and for identification of their main characteristics, differences and similarities.

### **3. THE NORTH EAST ADRIATIC REGION**

#### **3.1. Setting the Context: Introduction to the Region and the Dynamics of its Territorial Cooperation**

There is no common definition about the delineation of the North East Adriatic region since this might be defined geographically, culturally as well as according to administrative borders. Although the definition by administrative borders leaves some territories<sup>1</sup> that geographically and culturally belong to the region out of it,

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, the Croatian parts of the Istrian peninsula falling under the territory of Primorje-Gorski Kotar County belong to the region from the cultural as well as geographical perspective, but not from the administrative one.



and in reverse includes areas that neither geographically nor culturally are part of the North East Adriatic, it offers the clearest delineation of the region. For its purposes, the current paper accepts the definition of the region by administrative borders, according to which the North East Adriatic region includes Istria County in Croatia, the autonomous region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia in Italy and the South Primorska Statistical region in Slovenia (see figure 1). Throughout the years, the region has proven to be geographically and demographically stable, economically prosperous<sup>2</sup>, a region in which, as argued by Bufon (2002, p. 177) the political borders have moved considerably while the people and their cultures have not.



Fig. 1. The North East Adriatic case study region

Source: author's own illustration based on Google Maps

The political setting of the North East Adriatic region evolved in its present form just in the early 1990s and is a result of decades of changes in the political borders of the regional states. Before the First World War, the whole region belonged to the Austrian part of the Habsburg Empire. After 1918, Slovenia

<sup>2</sup> The economic power of the Croatian, Italian and Slovenian territories included in the North East Adriatic region is higher than the national average of their respective country. As of 2011, Istria County accounts for a GDP of 126% compared to the Croatian national average, Friuli-Venezia Giulia has a GDP of 114% compared to the Italian national average and the South Primorska Statistical region has 107% respectively (EUROSTAT, 2015).

and Croatia, with the exception of coastal Slovenia and Croatian Istria, became parts of “First Yugoslavia” while the rest of the region, from Trieste in the North to Pula in the South, fell under the Kingdom of Italy. Between 1943 and 1945 the region was under German occupation. In the years after the War, the ‘Free Territory Trieste’ was established. This lasted until 1954 and was a result of a border conflict between Italy and ‘Second Yugoslavia’ and an attempt to create a multi-ethnic state with three official languages and a common governor (Sluga, 2001, p. 146). For several decades the region belonged to the Republic of Italy and to the Yugoslav constituent republics of Slovenia and Croatia. The current borders of the region have been set with the dissolution of Yugoslavia in 1991 (Bufon and Minghi, 2000, p. 122).

Today, all three states: Croatia, Italy and Slovenia are EU Member States. While Slovenia’s EU approach was characterized by a comparatively systematic and coordinated set of administrative reforms (Kovač, 2011, p. 629) and its economy benefited from the fairly peaceful way to independence compared to other Balkan countries, Croatia still undergoes heavy transformational difficulties. The EU accession of Croatia and Slovenia has involved serious administrative reforms in both countries. These have been conducted in fulfilment of the EU accession criteria and have referred, among others, to changes at the regional level that are partly provoked by the EU funding patterns. The processes of administrative transformation of both countries show significant differences – while Slovenia has not introduced a regional administrative level yet and has made rather little progress in terms of decentralization (Kovač, 2011, p. 632), Croatia has had regional units since 1992 and has conducted several reforms of its regional policy already after becoming an EU accession candidate in 2004; yet the dependency of its regional level on the state one still remains high (Đulabić and Manojlović, 2011, p. 1061).

Apart from administrative reforms the EU accession of Slovenia and Croatia brought new dynamics as well as instruments of cooperation in the region. As claimed by Bufon (2002), the cross-border cooperation in the region before Yugoslavia’s dissolution was typical of that of a ‘region within regions’, where persistent socio-cultural and economic structures stretching across borders exist (in contrast to a ‘region of regions’ where these structures are less interwoven). At that time, cross-border cooperation had no institutional framework and rather existed in the sense of ‘spontaneous grass-roots cross-border relations’ (Bufon, 2002, p. 180). More institutionalised forms of cross-border cooperation developed after 1991. They often focused on the demands of minorities, such as minority radio and TV stations and cultural centres (Bufon, 2002, p. 189), and were accompanied by cooperation in the sense of informal exchange of knowledge and learning from more advanced partners (Kersan-Škabić, 2005, p. 267).

Today, cross-border cooperation in the North East Adriatic is carried out almost only with the support of EU funding programmes and is mainly project-based. In

the funding period 2007–2013, the Operational Programmes Italy-Slovenia and Slovenia-Croatia as well as the Adriatic IPA Programme (Instrument for Pre-Accession) provided a framework for initiation and implementation of various regional projects. While hitherto cooperation within projects proved to be successful and to strengthen the mutual trust between the partners, it has not developed into more stable structures for cooperation, and related activities have hardly been extended beyond the duration of the respective project. In the coming years, cross-border cooperation in the North East Adriatic is expected to get a further impulse by the new Operational Programmes and by the recently adopted EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region. This provides a strategic framework for new cooperation activities in the fields of environment, connectivity, tourism, regional competitiveness and economic development (CEC, 2014, p. 4). At the same time, similarly to other large scale cooperation formats, it points to the role of existing administrative structures and planning cultures and to the challenge of their coordination in the process of cooperation.

In the following, the main features of the Croatian, Italian and Slovenian planning systems and cultures will be studied in order to analyse to what extent existing differences and similarities impact the process of territorial cooperation in the North East Adriatic. The analysis focuses on identifying the main characteristics of the three countries' national planning systems and a discussion on the specific planning context in the three parts of the region – Istria County in Croatia, Friuli-Venezia Giulia in Italy and South Primorska in Slovenia. It is based on the theoretical models of Newman and Thornley, Balchin and Sýkora, the Compendium and the following three variables from the CPM – spatial planning, governance structures and political context. In the text the explicit reference to the CPM's origin of the three variables will be skipped for reasons of better readability.

### **3.2. Planning Systems and Cultures in the North East Adriatic Region**

#### **3.2.1. Croatia and Istria County: Ongoing Transformation and European Integration Process**

The Newman and Thornley model of families of nations and its extension by Balchin and Sýkora consider Croatia to be a member of the Eastern European family and a 'transition state of East Central Europe'. Both groups are characterised by great internal variations and the countries covered by them are in process of transition. This necessitates a more distinct assessment of each of the countries according to their specific features. This is particularly true for Croatia, which although being an EU member state, is characterized by ongoing reforms, by existing great regional disparities and by immaturity of its admin-

istrative and planning system. A proof of the latter is the incoherence and overlapping of the large number of sector plans, strategies and laws related to spatial questions (SEE, 2014, p. 18).

Looking at the recent developments in Croatia, it could be argued that the country is in an ongoing process of development of new planning regulations and adjustment of its administrative and planning system to the EU requirements. An illustrative example in this regard is the introduction of the first Law on Regional Development (LRD) in 2009 and its recent amendments in 2015. The LRD sets the national framework for regional development and obligates the regional level (consisting of 20 counties and the capital of Zagreb) to run Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) and to elaborate regional development strategies (Đulabić and Manojlović, 2011, p. 1063). Yet, despite the introduction of this new instrument, planning in Croatia is still characterised by lack of integrated approaches. It is affected by a sectoral division of competences and is still mainly concerned with land use management (SEE, 2014, p. 23). This significantly hampers the introduction of new strategic approaches which, as claimed by Đulabić and Manojlović, are currently not coherent, but are often seen as a 'mere list of plans and projects' (2011, p. 1059). This is especially evident at the municipal level that is largely focused on tasks such as zoning and is characterized by high fragmentation as well as weak financial capacities (Đulabić and Manojlović, 2011, p. 1065).

Presently, the governance structures in Croatia appear underdeveloped compared to those of other EU member states. The horizontal and vertical integration of the administration in Croatia is rather weak (Đulabić and Manojlović, 2011, p. 1065) and the involvement of non-governmental stakeholders is still insufficient (Đulabić and Manojlović, 2011, p. 1060). Yet, some regional differences could be observed in this regard. Istria, which is one of the most developed regions of Croatia, has a comparatively long and stable tradition of regional development. The Istrian Regional Development Agency was founded in 1999 as the country's first RDA, ten years before the LRD made RDAs mandatory for all Croatian counties in 2009. The RDA is responsible for the county's Development Strategy, which is focusing on green growth and which, unlike its state-level counterpart, gets implemented in a coordinated and target-oriented way. It is coherent with the EU 2020 strategy, inextricably related to EU funding opportunities, and puts special emphasis on sustainable tourism (CeSPI, 2013, p. 13). Already in the pre-accession time, Istria's benefit from EU funding was higher than in most other counties. Contrary to Croatia as a whole, Istria has participated in a number of projects from the very beginning (Kersan-Škabić, 2005, p. 250). Furthermore, it has been involved in cross-border cooperation activities with stakeholders from Slovenia and Italy (Kersan-Škabić, 2005, p. 267), which enabled regional actors to gather cooperation experience and to early set cross-border cooperation in the regional political agenda.

### **3.2.2. Italy and Friuli-Venezia Giulia: Strong Regional Level, Despite Complexity in Structures and Procedures**

According to Newman and Thornley's model, Italy belongs to the Napoleonic family of nations. Balchin and Sýkora feature it as a 'unitary state with planning powers substantially devolved to the regions'. While the state level sets guidelines and frameworks for planning, the regional level (consisting of 20 regions, five of them, including Friuli-Venezia Giulia with the status of an autonomous region and with the right to enact legislation on individual local matters) is in charge of regional development. Since the constitutional reform of 2001, it has even legislative powers in territorial governance and spatial planning. The municipal level is mainly responsible for land-use management, but it increasingly engages in strategic affairs (Lingua and Servillo, 2014, p. 135).

According to the Compendium, Italy belongs to the urbanism tradition. However, debates on more integrated approaches have been taking place since the 1970s (Lingua and Servillo, 2014, p. 128) and in recent years, in the absence of a national legislative framework for regional planning, some regions (especially in the North) elaborated highly innovative development strategies integrating questions of regional economic development (Lingua and Servillo, 2014, p. 139). Speaking in the categories of the Compendium, on the Italian regional level the comprehensive integrated approach to planning is prevalent; yet, methods and instruments belonging to the regional economic approach can be observed, too. The same approach is followed on the state level, while on the local level land-use management is paramount (ESPON, 2006a, p. 124). As argued by Lingua and Servillo (2014), the 'urban governmental cultures' there are changing and cities are increasingly acting like 'local laboratories for the elaboration of strategic interventions through innovative governance processes' (p. 136).

New network-like governance structures in Italy have been on the rise for already two decades; their introduction was brought forward through allocation patterns of the EU Structural Funds (Lingua and Servillo, 2014, p. 138). However, the horizontal integration, especially on the state level, is described as insufficient and there still exists an unfavourable division between sectoral policies. Furthermore, sectoral division between economic development (placed mainly on the national and regional level) and spatial management (on the regional and city level) continues to exist, which additionally inhibits the adaptation of more integrated approaches (Lingua and Servillo, 2014, p. 133).

In Italy, governance structures show differences in terms of performance, responsibilities and resources. Compared to the country's average, the Italian region Friuli-Venezia Giulia in the North East Adriatic has a rather strong position in terms of informal governance. It has gathered experience in intra-regional cooperation and takes part in the 'Interregional Table of the Padano-Alpine-Maritime Macro Area'. This aims at harmonising regional spatial plans and at developing

‘supra-local shared visions’ that is a new initiative for Italy (Lingua and Servillo, 2014, p. 140). At the same time, when shifting the view to the international level, Friuli-Venezia Giulia can be distinguished from other Italian regions by its leading role in cross-border cooperation with Slovenia (Nadalutti, 2012, p. 186).

### **3.2.3. Slovenia and South Primorska: Strong Horizontal Cooperation and Pressure for Decentralisation**

Similar to the case of Croatia, the models of Newman and Thornley, and Balchin and Sýkora do not provide a distinct assessment of the administrative and planning system in Slovenia. Looking at Slovenia and the developments it has gone through in the two and a half decades since its independence, it could be argued that the country bears many characteristics of Balchin and Sýkora’s group of ‘unitary states with planning powers devolved to the municipalities’. Planning is a responsibility of both the state and the municipal level. While the state level defines long-term goals, sets a framework for planning on the sub-national levels and intervenes in case of non-compliance of local plans with national ones, the municipalities, which are financially ‘fairly independent’ from the state level, are concerned with land-use planning as well as local development strategies (ESPON, 2006b, p. 193). Slovenia does not have a regional administrative level. Between 2006 and 2008, the introduction of 14 provinces as an intermediary administrative level was discussed in Parliament, but finally did not pass (Andreou and Bache, 2010, p. 31). Looking at the current administrative system in the country and considering the lack of intermediate level, it might be argued that while the horizontal integration of the administrative system is strong, the vertical integration still faces significant challenges (ESPON, 2006a, p. 134).

According to the categories of the Compendium, the current Slovenian planning system in general follows a comprehensive integrated approach. It is characterized by a systematic and formal hierarchy of plans and a major role of the local level in the process of planning. At the same time, the local level predominantly uses instruments and methods of the urbanism and land-use management tradition. Interestingly enough, although Slovenia does not have a regional administrative level, it has defined statistical NUTS 3 regions and has featured altogether twelve Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) covering each of the regions. The processes run and the instruments used at the level of the statistical regions bear characteristics of both the comprehensive integrated and the regional economic approach (ESPON, 2006a, p. 127).

The establishment of the RDAs as new governance structures was largely forced by the pressure for decentralization. The RDAs were invented mainly to comply with European standards in the course of Slovenia’s EU accession. Their main task is to serve as an intermediary for the allocation of EU grants (Lindstrom,



2005, p. 6). Although all agencies are committed to partnership and network principles (Lindstrom, 2005, p. 12) they prove differences in terms of performance, which could to a large extent be explained by the differences in the local context and culture of planning. An illustrative example for this is the South Primorska RDA in the Slovenian part of the North East Adriatic. This RDA belongs to the more progressive ones of the country. As pointed out by Lindstrom (2005, p. 12), this could be explained by its comparatively high financial independence from the state level, its balanced membership structure, its network-like character and the tradition of similar pre-existing networks. Based on this observation, it could be expected that the South Primorska RDA has a much longer tradition in cooperation compared to the other RDAs that might be an asset for future cooperation activities.

### **3.3. Bridging Multiple Worlds: How do Planning Systems and Cultures Influence Territorial Cooperation in the North East Adriatic Region?**

The analysis of the main features of the planning systems and cultures in Croatia, Italy and Slovenia has revealed the existence of significant differences between the three countries. The application of the Culturised Planning Model on its turn has proven that the differences become less prevalent when shifting the look from the country level to the level of the North East Adriatic region and its three parts Istria, Friuli-Venezia Giulia and South Primorska. How do the differences and similarities identified by means of the theoretical models affect territorial cooperation in the North East Adriatic region?

The analysis has shown that the scope of centralization and the allocation of planning powers in the three countries differ quite substantially. In Croatia, the municipalities have a rather weak position and the regional level plays an increasingly important role in terms of planning, but is still fairly dependent on the state level. In Italy, the main planning responsibilities are held by the local as well as regional level which has strong, but regionally disparate capacities. In Slovenia, the local level has the autonomy to decide about planning issues, a regional administrative level is missing and the regional development is mainly a responsibility of the RDAs, which are under strong influence of the state. All these differences influence the process of territorial cooperation in the North East Adriatic region. This is particularly true for the lack of a regional level in Slovenia, as a result of which Friuli-Venezia Giulia in Italy should rather cooperate with the Slovenian state level – a fact that causes confusion since a regional body claims to be on a level playing field with a national one (Nadalutti, 2012, p. 187). This jurisdictional confusion represents a serious obstacle for institutional cross-border cooperation in the North East Adriatic. A recent example in this line is the discussion from 2005 on the establishment of an Upper Adriatic European Grouping of

Territorial Cooperation (EGTC). The discussion brought to expression both the unequal readiness of the three countries for involvement in the new cooperation format as well as their contradictory expectations regarding the structure and allocation of responsibilities within the new cooperation. Slovenia, for instance, insisted on being involved as a state and in settling the new Joint Technical Secretariat in its capital Ljubljana and not in Trieste in the North East Adriatic, an idea that was seriously opposed both by Croatian Istria and Friuli-Venezia Giulia (Nadalutti, 2012, p. 192; expert interviews). The tensions that arose in relation to the new EGTC reveal significant differences between the countries in terms of competences and influence on cross-border cooperation. Italy, for instance, despite of the gatekeeping role of the state level, allows much more influence of the sub-national one on cross-border cooperation issues than it is the case in Croatia and Slovenia. This directly affects cooperation activities in the North East Adriatic as it delays or even completely hampers these.

The analysis of the planning systems and cultures in Croatia, Italy and Slovenia has revealed that the three countries use different approaches and planning instruments. Croatia focuses rather on land-use management (with other approaches being on the rise). Italy stands in the urbanism tradition and proves great regional disparities and a tendency towards integrated approaches on the regional level in particular, while Slovenia follows a comprehensive integrated approach. These findings come along with differences regarding the maturity of the systems in the three countries that mainly refer to the state of horizontal and vertical integration and the level of public acceptance of planning. Croatia is in a process of transformation, with still insufficient horizontal and vertical integration of the administration (Đulabić and Manojlović, 2011, p. 1065) and a society that has a 'profound neglect of common and long-term interests in space' (Krančević, 2005, p. 238). The Italian system, in turn, is characterized by complex procedures, intermediate level of maturity and certain inertia towards reforms (Lingua and Servillo, 2014, p. 129), while Slovenia has a stable and mature planning system (Tosics *et al.*, 2010, p. 241). At first glance, the inertia towards reform of the Italian system together with the immaturity of the Croatian one might be assumed as serious barriers to cross-border cooperation in the North East Adriatic due to the uncertainties these are related to. At the same time, however, it could be argued that exactly the ongoing process of transformation opens chances for adjustment of the systems towards more unification and might positively influence cooperation in the future.

Yet, the analysis has shown that a solely national assessment is insufficient and that there exist significant differences within the individual countries. These result from each specific context and find their expression in local planning cultures characterized by specific governance structures, strategic planning practices and political contexts. In this sense, while a general look at the national level shows that the progress of Croatia, Italy and Slovenia in developing governance structures, for instance, significantly differs, a look at the level of the North East



Adriatic reveals that all three parts of the region are much more progressive in governance issues compared to the respective national average. They prove to have longer tradition in networking, in the establishment of active cross-border and international cooperation and in the involvement of NGOs and private actors (CeSPI, 2013, p. 8 on Istria county). In this line, the RDAs of South Primorska and Istria County, which serve to bridge gaps caused by institutional difference, the early establishment of the Istrian RDA and its experience in acquisition of EU funds, the long lasting ties between Croatia and Italy and the learning process that results from this partnership are all examples illustrating the positive influence of planning cultures in the North East Adriatic on the cooperation in the region. Considering this, it could be argued that the established tradition of cooperation between the regional agencies and the experience and active involvement of regional actors represents a facilitating setting for the future development of the North East Adriatic cooperation process.

However, when looking at the level of strategic planning in the three parts of the North East Adriatic, the picture does not seem that coherent. Cross-border strategic planning works out in some cases, in particular when EU funding is available and the RDAs are involved. A case in point is Istria County's Development Strategy focusing on sustainable tourism. In this field, several cross-border projects, especially between Istrian and Italian stakeholders, were implemented in recent years (CeSPI, 2013, p. 10). In other cases, however, the structures for strategic cooperation are missing. This accounts for example for the field of cross-border land-use planning. In Croatian Istria and South Primorska, for instance, municipality planners in charge of land-use management are hardly in contact with each other, which inhibits the adaptation of new strategic approaches and leads to diverse problems related to nature protection and land utilization. Berdavs (2008) claims that the main obstacles in this regard are the existing jurisdictional problems<sup>3</sup> and the lack of a framework for long-term cooperation and argues that an EGTC could possibly provide such a framework. Yet, the establishment of a new EGTC in the North East Adriatic is currently not envisaged, which is – besides the political issues explained at the beginning of this chapter – due to a lack of capacities at the local level (Berdavs, 2008, p. 13; expert interviews).

Differences are also obvious when it comes to the specific political context in the three parts of the region. The analysis has shown, that compared to the rest of the North East Adriatic, Croatia's Istria County is most advanced and shows political will in overcoming historical tensions. Supporting examples for this statement are the early acknowledgement of minority rights and the official recognition of bilinguality in the county. In the case of Istria, identity is defined rather regionally than nationally, which was shown for instance during Istria's opposition to

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<sup>3</sup> In Slovenia the management of natural reserves as well as the spatial development along state borders fall under state jurisdiction.

president Tuđman's nationalism of the 1990s. The common willingness to overcome historical tensions, to look for dialogue and to jointly tackle shared problems positively influences territorial cooperation and enables the setting of proper conditions for building mutual trust (expert interviews). This, together with the political continuity, especially in Istria county, represents an advantage for the implementation of cooperation projects (CeSPI, 2013, p. 8) and is seen by local stakeholders as a main asset for the future development of the North East Adriatic cooperation process.

#### **4. CONCLUDING REMARKS AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES**

This study sought to trace the influence of planning systems and planning cultures on the process of territorial cooperation in the North East Adriatic region and its three consisting parts – Istria County in Croatia, the autonomous region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia in Italy and the South Primorska statistical region in Slovenia. Using adequate theoretical models, the study found differences in the impact of planning systems and planning cultures on the regional cooperation dynamics. It has shown that static models such as Newman and Thornley's families of nations and the EU Compendium enable an analysis at the national level and show that the administrative and planning systems of Croatia, Italy and Slovenia differ significantly when it comes to the allocation of planning powers and the degree of regional and local autonomy, for instance. The static models, however, seem to largely neglect the regional dimension and the specificities of the local and regional context, and need to be applied in combination with more dynamic ones. These enable more targeted analysis based on consideration of main regional characteristics, the specific planning and socio-political context and their influence on the organization and outcomes of cooperation processes.

A more diversified regional perspective proves to be of particular importance in the North East Adriatic case. The findings of the analysis of the three individual parts of the region suggest that these territories distinguish themselves from the respective national average, which may be explained, among other things, by the promotion of governance processes and the gathered cooperation experience. Furthermore, they prove similarities that stretch across borders and set a specific context for the region, enabling thus the formation of what Bufon (2002) defines as a 'region within regions'. This shows that while the differences at the national level prove to be significant, they considerably decrease when going down to the regional level. Hence, the North East Adriatic, despite facing internal differences in terms of varying political realities, for instance, is based on much stronger, and nuanced, relationships between its individual parts.

Nevertheless, the current state of territorial cooperation in the North East Adriatic seems to mirror the identified difference between the national and regional perspective. While in general territorial cooperation in the region is hampered by the different organisation of the Croatian, Italian and Slovenian administrative and planning systems, in particular it is facilitated by the specific regional conditions and planning context and culture. This finding points to the need for reinforcement of regional consideration in the examination of territorial cooperation processes in the North East Adriatic and raises a few issues for future research that have not been fully explored so far. Among these is the need for more in-depth investigation of the interdependency between territorial cooperation and cultural context including, among other things, a more place-based study of the regional stakeholders' involvement, interests, beliefs and perception of cooperation. This requires a thorough application of all three dimensions of the Culturised Planning Model (planning artefacts, planning environment and societal environment) and a more focused study of the planning and societal environment in the individual parts of the North East Adriatic. Both will enable the investigation of the specific cultural context as an important regional asset as well as the identification of place-based approaches to raise the commitment to regular locally initiated cooperation. Further research should also be placed on targeted investigation of the extent to which the different planning approaches identified by the Compendium influence cooperation activities as well as their effectiveness in providing conditions for setting and working towards common cooperation goals. Moreover, future efforts should focus on targeted analysis of the still ongoing transformation processes in parts of the region that may have significant influence on the development of territorial cooperation in the North East Adriatic. Particular attention in this regard should be paid to further investigation of the situation in Croatia and the possible changes in its cross-border relations in case of accession to Schengen and in the course of its further EU integration. The latter includes, for example, an investigation of Croatia's benefits from the increased financial resources of the 2014–2020 EU funding period and the influence of possible further adjustment of its planning system to EU legislation on its cross-border practices.

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