The European Spatial Approach

The Role of Power and Knowledge in Strategic Planning and Policy Evaluation

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This article presents a discussion about an emerging area of evaluation discourse, the 'European spatial approach'. It examines the current policy framework at the European-wide level by exploring the alternative planning and public policy paradigms that underpin the case for rationality within this framework. By using such a theoretical review, the article seeks to argue that the current deployment of evaluation within strategic spatial policy and planning is poorly understood, and further work is needed to develop an understanding of the role of power and knowledge in rationality, and in particular the role they play within the pluralist models of evaluation that are emerging within the wider EU policy processes. This is illustrated by specific evaluation experiences within the EU Trans-European Transport Networks and Structural Funds.

Introduction

We are entering a new era of spatial planning in Europe. Momentum is increasing to create a 'spatial approach' at the European level (CEC, 1997), integrating the disparate strands of EU spatial policy, and establishing a basis for the harmonization of spatial planning across the member states. The spatial approach co-exists at present alongside these EU-wide spatial policies (Bachtler and Turok, 1997). New and recent initiatives are providing the first building blocks in a process which, though still hazy and ill-defined, promises to set new challenges for the spatial planning systems in the different EU member states, and the current attempts at trans-national planning, such as INTERREG (e.g. Faludi, 1997; Hull, 1996; Williams, 1996). However, in this article, we consider just one element – the use of evaluation within the EU policy processes – and explore

some of the broad conceptual issues raised in developing evaluation in any European-wide spatial planning perspective.

First, we seek to illustrate how, in the distinct but overlapping fields of spatial planning and public policy-making, alternative paradigms are contesting the basis of rationality of the planning/policy process.¹ We then use this theoretical review to explore how the emerging field of European-wide spatial planning is similarly contested, in particular over the selection and development of evaluation strategies and methodologies, illustrating our argument with established EU spatial policies articulated through the Trans-European Networks (TENs) and Structural Funds. At the heart of our exploration is a concern that the deployment of evaluation in spatial planning is shaped by poorly understood power struggles which impose interest-based hegemonies of knowledge. In this way, we postulate that power shapes knowledge and determines policy under the banner of rationality.

Evaluation in Spatial Policy and Planning

Spatial planning within Britain and other EU member states has emerged out of particular cultural, political and economic circumstances (Greed, 1996; Williams, 1996). Whilst acknowledging our anglo-centric position, it is not the purpose of this article to review these constructs, but rather examine spatial planning and processes of land-use policy within a wider interpretation of public policy (Evans, 1997). It is possible to regard the function of a more broadly drawn urban and regional planning as a means of balancing and arbitrating between competing interests in land or space, where (Department of the Environment, 1992):

- land is both a factor of production and an environmental resource;
- the demand for and use of land and territory is a reflection of complex social and economic processes involving a multiplicity of private interests;
- planning draws its objectives from a wide variety of interests, but seeks to strike a balance in the 'public interest';
- in comparison with most other areas, planning involves long timescales and substantial time lags;
- planning operates across a number of scales of government often involving the need to balance local and wider interests; and
- planning seeks to achieve its aims through a variety of instruments which operate in parallel with other strands of public policy.

Thus spatial planning is never concerned purely with physical land use but must also relate to and allow for other policy dimensions. In this context the spatial plan is seen as a framework in which a set of relationships prioritize certain criteria and action over others and provide a point of reference for those making subsequent decisions (Healey, 1994).

In theory and practice, spatial planning has been strongly associated with rationality, and evaluation has been viewed as an essential element within this. Evaluation serves to reconcile the interests which become affected by the planning framework, as decisions change the spatial patterns of economic, social and

environmental costs and benefits within an area. Attempts to establish a theoretically grounded view of what evaluation should entail reveal that there has been a growing schism within urban and regional planning theory over the last 10 years (Beauregard, 1989). Thus the technical and administrative techniques created in the past are seen as being based on a paradigm of narrow scientific rationalism, which is now widely regarded as being inappropriate. It now appears to be the turn of communicative planning (also argumentative and collaborative planning) (Fischer and Forester, 1993; Healey, 1996, 1997). This conception of planning accepts limits to power, to empirical knowledge, to the resolvability of moral dilemmas, but also seeks to enable the world of action to start out or move on toward something better, without having to specify precisely a goal. It is future seeking rather than future defining. Spatial planning theorists have long acknowledged that any planning framework embodies views and decisions about the nature of the socio-economic forces, the public and other interests and the planning objectives. But, since any planning framework exerts power over subsequent decisions, the preparation and use of regulatory frameworks in spatial planning are now commonly seen as more than a technical and bureaucratic exercise, and clearly involve political struggle. As a result, Throgmorton (1993) reflects that planners 'learn, and come to say, that planning and analysis are technical and disciplined by objective methods, but they also learn, and come to fear, that planning and analysis are political and subject to outrageous manipulations'. This realization or acceptance permeates thinking in planning practice and the theorizing about planning, as well as the area of concern in this article, the nature and scope of evaluation.

One of the many reasons for this theoretical re-examination has been the apparent failure of the evaluation techniques and methods used in spatial planning. As Shefer and Kaess (1990) claim, 'planners depend heavily on this interaction between objectives and evaluation methods in their analysis, planning and implementation processes'. Reviews of such methods (see for example Banister, 1994; Lichfield, 1996; Shefer and Kaess, 1990; Voogd, 1997) reveal that many techniques have been developed over the last 25 years to serve the paradigm of scientific rationality. Thus in practice, cost-benefit analysis still remains in use, and is regarded as a viable method for clarifying the consequences of different choices despite the many fundamental shortcomings identified by Hill (1968) and Self (1975). The planning balance sheet (PBS) and goals achievement matrix (GAM) have also had an important impact, but as Voogd (1997) claims, not so much for the technical sophistication of their methods but more their power of conviction and transparency. These approaches have also remained in use, largely in their original form, since critiques have mainly focused on the technocratic method of their use. Multi-criteria analyses (MVA) developed in response to these criticisms in an attempt to take account of the conflicting interests and the many dimensions that planners have to arbitrate between.

However, more fundamental criticisms and views of urban and regional planning emerged in the 1980s. It was argued that the prevailing methods for evaluation were biased in favour of the status quo and ignored equity and participation issues. Planners became more aware that public decisions redistribute costs and

benefits between different interests. Thus Lichfield (1996) has further developed the PBS model to construct a process of community impact evaluation (CIE). He claims that

... there is no completely scientific objective means of striking a balance between environmental and other conditions. ... Accordingly, the reasons for a decision should be open and accountable, and the value judgements that necessarily underlie it should be clearly identified, and there should be the widest possible opportunity for others who may be affected to contribute to the decision.

But he acknowledges that CIE is rooted in the old rationality constructs of impact assessment and cost-benefit analysis. The concern with sustainable environments (Pearce, 1993) has also seen the development of further methodological advances in the measurement of environmental costs and benefits within Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA), although, for example, Voogd (1997) claims that there is not much evidence that EIAs play an important role in actual decision-making in the Netherlands.

Thus in concluding their review of evaluation methods in spatial planning, Shefer and Kaess (1990) suggest evaluation practice has echoed the prevailing social climate, and despite the array of methods available, practitioners have remained conservative in their trends. Voogd (1997) goes further and believes that traditional concepts that underpinned evaluation practice, such as comprehensive rationality, have been replaced by new concepts such as consensus building, and highlights a growing need for a more open, but well-structured decision-making process. Interestingly, he propounds that evaluation methods should be adjusted to incorporate 'negotiated knowledge', believing this to be an interesting new avenue to explore by academic planners. Whilst this call has been taken up, Faludi and Altes (1994) suggest that the proponents of communicative planning give no or few clues on how evaluation might occur. Instead, they argue that this new form of planning 'focuses on what planners do in their day-to-day work ... with an emphasis on how they can promote democratic values' (Faludi and Altes, 1994). The evaluation role for the planner or planning in these concepts is thus expressed in terms of enabling activities, of rhetorical criticism and reflection. These represent very complex arguments concerning the nature of the communicative planning process, and as yet do not present clear normative views on practical courses of action. Can more be learnt, or some response to these issues be elicited from the wider literature that exists in the general field of policy evaluation?

The concern with evaluation in broader public policy-making stems from different concerns than those usually expressed in the area of urban and regional planning. However, an examination of some recent contributions reveals that public policy evaluation is at a watershed (Pawson and Tilley, 1997), and faces contention and a dialogue similar to that outlined in urban and regional planning, as evaluators and evaluation theorists deliberate the merits of various approaches and paradigms. The scientific rational model, based on the traditional tenets of welfare economics and systems analysis (see for example Carley, 1980), has come under increasing scrutiny. The cost-utility and

impact assessment techniques inherent in this approach are no different to those examined above within urban and regional planning, encompassing methodologies such as cost-benefit analysis, but also the use of indicators and evaluation research studies. Carley (1980) indicates that the widespread promotion and application of these analytic-rational techniques is accompanied by 'a substantial body of literature warning of dangers inherent in such analysis, dissenting from the overly enthusiastic expectations of some form of rationality, and decrying the application of rationality to what are seen as political decisions'.

In many areas of public policy evaluation, scientific rationality is seen to be challenged by an economic rationality. As Healey (1994) claims

public policy in Britain has seen the increasing penetration of the vocabulary of economic evaluation into public policy formulation and implementation . . . a methodology of neo-liberal political ideology . . . an attempt to establish a dominant hegemony which crowds out the voices of other systems of meaning, while privileging big capital.

Indeed, it is acknowledged that the use of performance targets, indicators and output objectives alongside new contracting arrangements for services which are inherent to this hegemony (Henkel, 1991), is an experience which extends well beyond our island, and has been referred to as a 'new public management' (Pollitt, 1995). Although not an approach widely applicable to or used in urban and regional planning apart from setting targets for service delivery, it has permeated other areas of spatial policy in the UK, such as the evaluation of regeneration policies (Hambleton and Thomas, 1995; Oatley, 1998).

Finally, an equally important debate has its roots in the theoretical deliberations that arose out of the criticism of the scientific rational approach referred to above. This saw the rejection of previous quantitative and experimental based evaluation methods, and the start of a critical dialogue on how the interaction between evaluation and politics could be tackled. Karlsson (1996) sees this debate as being about how to develop an evaluation that gives stakeholders, especially those who lack power, a better chance to have their say. He goes on to argue that there is more than one stakeholder model of evaluation, but each one can be seen as a way of legitimizing political power. One of the main contributions to these deliberations was made by Guba and Lincoln (1989) in their 'fourth generation' evaluation, which has many similarities to the communicative turn in planning. Fourth generation evaluation can be defined as an interpretative or constructivist approach to evaluation which is based on, and guided by, issues identified by stakeholders. As with the exploration of planning models, an eclectic review of evaluation literature reveals a number of adaptations and developments of this 'fourth generation' approach as well as further critiques and paradigms (for example Chen, 1990; Pawson and Tilley, 1997). In this article we choose to focus on the themes of power and knowledge in an attempt to clarify and draw some parallels with the urban and regional planning literature, at this stage ignoring the many nuances of meaning associated with the array of words utilized in these debates.

Power and Knowledge in Planning and Evaluation

In proposing new forms of communicative planning, Healey (1994, 1996, 1997) argues for the development of inter-discursive policy formulation largely based on the work of Habermas. This would address the need for empowerment, the demands of multi-cultural societies, and the cleavage and differentiation in society's interests by establishing new forms of communication.

This involves not merely assessing who wins and loses with respect to particular issues, but whose terms dominate the discussion and who is included and excluded by this. The normative challenge is to invent forms of inter-discursive communication . . . which also have the power to resist or at least limit the discursive domination of powerful groups in plan-making and subsequent use. (Healey, 1994)

But as Healey (1994) herself reminds us – 'How far is it possible to imagine that a development plan can be anything other than either a project of the powerful or an ineffective dream of the idealistic?'. The 'fourth generation' model is also seen as being conditional on some power-free, ideal-speech situation, but as Karlsson (1996) argues:

trying to solve questions about criteria through a power-free dialogue between interest groups is associated with Habermas . . . the argument against such a strategy for solving conflicts between different interest groups is that it appears to be too idealistic . . . Habermas's theory of dialogue contains within it the dream of an ideal form of life, without any ruling elite. . . .

Instead, Rebien (1996) sees relationships of power to be involved in all processes that have to do with knowledge creation, knowledge communication and knowledge use. Thus following Foucault's line of thinking, Rebien (1996) suggests that power should be looked at as something natural and productive. Consequently, from this perspective, although the power relationships are asymmetrical, this does not prevent interaction between stakeholders, it may be restricted but not powerless.

The creation of knowledge is inherent to the concept of a learning process, which has been incorporated in much of the evaluation debate. It is usually seen as some form of critical dialogue, which allows a more probing and accountable process of government actions to emerge (for example, see Laughlin and Broadbent, 1996), a similar role as that seen for the rhetorical planner. Throgmorton (1993) argues that

. . . planning analysts should think of survey research and other tools as rhetorical tropes that reply to prior utterances (and give meaning and power to the larger narratives of which they are part), seek to persuade specific audiences, create open meetings subject to diverse interpretations, and help to constitute planning characters and communities. . . . They should embrace persuasive discourse and political conflict and realize that survey results are, like all alleged 'facts' of planning analysis, inherently tropal and contestable. . . . Surveys must be scientific and rhetorical, professional and political, because they, like all other planning and analytical tools, configure policy-oriented arguments.

In a similar way, Karlsson (1996) sees the critical dialogue in evaluation as the goal of understanding. In his view, the goal is to reach a greater insight and clarity

of the foundations upon which one's own and others' judgements are based, and by that to become more enlightened and active a participant in evaluation. The evaluator is seen as a provocative questioner, whose role is not to develop thought but to break up thought. Crucially, he also recognizes that it is also important to acknowledge that the dialogue strategy is not an unproblematic one. The difficulty with dialogue as a strategy is that it demands that each interest group has enough resources to be able to participate. There is a risk of only those who are resource-powerful achieving participation.

Drawing conclusions from this debate is difficult, and obviously the theoretical underpinnings of evaluation need further development and exploration, a task we would argue as being particularly useful within the current dialogue in planning theory. Ultimately, we would also argue for the practice of evaluation to also be assimilated within these discourses. We support the claim by Radaelli and Dente (1996) that evaluation can be described as a 'process of transformation of ideas and knowledge' and the transmission of knowledge into the policy process is seen to be a crucial issue. Within the current advancement of communicative planning, this raises the question of how to develop an evaluation that gives the stakeholders, especially those who lack power, a better chance to have their say (Healey, 1994; Karlsson, 1996). Whilst models based on scientific rationality, either in the form of welfare economics and systems analysis or the new public management, may be seen as excluding hegemonies, the search for an alternative means of dealing with the twin concepts of power and knowledge still remains deeply contested, but cannot be denied.

We therefore have to ask of any evaluation:

- who carries out the evaluations and who participates?
- at what level of governance are they carried out and how transparent are they?
- what is the normative content, the knowledge base and the knowledge-boundaries of the evaluations ?

We now wish to consider how the debates and tensions between alternative paradigms of rationality in planning and public policy can be used to probe at another new construct, the emergent activities of European-wide spatial planning.

Emerging European-wide Spatial Planning

The emergence of EU spatial planning raises important issues concerning its form and legitimacy. Discussing future land use regulatory frameworks, Morphet (1997) suggests that Europe has witnessed a renewed interest in strategic spatial planning during the 1990s, an interest which has led to a review of the tools and approaches which might constitute these frameworks, and a convergence of interest in a common European 'spatial approach'. For many years, the EU has implemented measures in a range of sectors which have such spatial effects. A wide range of policies, regulations and other instruments are being used to pursue the key EU objectives of the creation of the single market, the promotion of balanced and sustainable economic and social development, and reductions in disparities

between levels of development of different regions. Many programmes respond to problems in particular parts of the EU, such as regions in industrial decline, structurally backward regions, and regions in need of rural and agricultural development. So spatial redistribution is at the heart of many programmes. Alongside these policies with clear spatial aims, other sectoral policies, e.g. for transport and the environment, have impacts on land use and development. However, the spatial impacts of many of these policies and programmes have often been overlooked in their implementation and evaluation (Davies, 1994).

Furthermore, tensions potentially exist between EU policy objectives and those of national planning systems. The existence of many national systems of land ownership, planning control and building regulations, working with separate and potentially exclusive objectives, could be argued as counter to the Single Market, which depends on member states and other interests pursuing policies and actions which are in harmony with the overall EU integration project. This certainly creates problems in transnational planning situations, and questions the possibility of constructing a planning framework within which these conflicting objectives can be pursued equitably (Williams, 1996). So, the momentum towards EU spatial planning can be seen to be linked with the need to deal with not only spatial problems, but also conflicting spatial objectives at different levels and in different regions.

In the 1990s the EU, through Commission initiatives and the work of the inter-governmental Committee of Spatial Development (CSD), progressed a series of initiatives on spatial co-operation in Europe (Williams, 1996). The key developments have been the explorations of European spatial trends and concepts, in *Europe 2000* (CEC, 1991) and *Europe 2000+* (CEC, 1994), and the compendium of studies of spatial planning systems and policies in the member states (CEC, 1997a; Shaw et al., 1995). This work has been buttressed by increasing transnational actions by member states, for example in cooperation over international infrastructure links, and by the increasing political support for transnational planning in the EU institutions, particularly the Committee of the Regions (Williams, 1996).

In 1997, the publication of the First Official Draft of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP), produced by the CSD, marked the next major step towards a coherent approach to EU spatial planning (CEC, 1997b). Together with its further iteration in 1998 (CEC, 1998), the draft ESDP has been the vehicle for wide-ranging consultation at the EU level and within member states on the future direction of spatial planning in Europe. It attempts to provide a framework for simplifying co-ordination of transnational planning between member states, but also anticipates in the longer term a broader EU level of planning activity. It intends to encompass urban systems, infrastructure and knowledge, natural and cultural heritage and territorial perspectives, synthesized at EU level. It is also intended that the tools for implementation will form a cascade from the EU to the local level. The ESDP sets the context for mega-regional perspectives and visions to be developed under INTERREG IIc, which constitutes a key step towards a European level of planning, in that it enables cross-border transnational planning initiatives between national and European levels. The ESDP

gives a view on the potential for the further institutionalization of European spatial planning.

The spatial analysis within the ESDP aims to construct 'a solid patrimony of analyses and interpretation referred to the whole of the European territory' (CSD, 1996). The analysis focuses on components of European territory in the three fields of action – (1) urban systems, infrastructures, and natural and cultural heritage, (2) on the spatial impacts of major socio-economic phenomena (e.g. the information society), and (3) on the spatial impacts of sectoral policies. The prospect here is of a dramatic increase in the need for gathering and management of spatial information. For example, member states are likely to be required to contribute analyses of the territorial effects produced at national level by both Community and national policies (CSD, 1996). The definition of co-ordinated and compatible spatial options to be pursued at national, transnational and EU level forms the second core area of work for the ESDP. The options are identified by member states, and are building towards what is again termed a 'common patrimony' (CSD, 1996) where broad support is found for particular options. Compatibility here is defined according to the objectives set within the ESDP, which reflect once again the major EU agendas, and the existing sectoral policies. For example, one key ESDP objective which closely follows EU policy is to optimize the contribution of the trans-European networks to economic and social cohesion and sustainable development.

Thus, EU spatial planning is being developed in a complex institutional framework, and will be shaped by major tensions and power relations. It is important then that we do not try to understand this emergence of an EU spatial planning framework as a purely comprehensive scientific rational process, or the benign convergence of national planning systems. It bends to an agenda, and to forces, which contest the future path of development of Europe, and so is likely to have at its core the currently hegemonic ideologies of the single market and political integration, but will also reflect other debates about cohesion and environment (Faludi, 1997; Hague, 1996). Thus the process of creating a European spatial planning framework is not reducible to a technical exercise. It is implicitly normative and ideological – about politics and power as much as about rational policy making. As Giannakourou (1996) claims

If the needs of the European integration process seem to have added a European level of spatial planning policy to that of the national states, it is the economic and institutional properties and dilemmas of this same integration process that circumscribe the conceptual identity and the normative value of the emerging policy . . . the central question becomes what the conceptual and ideological identity of a European spatial planning policy can be under a market-oriented integration system.

Clearly then, the integration of the objectives and normative positions of the many different levels of government, and other actors, will be an important factor in the shaping of the European spatial approach. It seems important, then, that we should attempt to understand the effects of power relations and normative agendas on the emerging planning framework. We posit that evaluation is a critical element in any such planning framework. We point to the conceptualization

of evaluation, in at least some planning/policy paradigms, as a political tool which responds to the norms and values of the hegemony within which it is deployed. We suggest that this awareness might be used to design evaluations which deliberately seek to avoid this normative loading, and adopt a bottom-up approach to the identification and assessment of key values. The key tasks for European spatial planning will be to attempt to resolve or mitigate these critical tensions.

Evaluation of Transport Networks and Structural Funds

Above we suggest that there has, so far, been little examination of the role of evaluation, but believe it is a live and contested issue at the heart of the EU spatial approach. The contested territory includes the selection of instruments/tools for evaluation, and the embedding of these tools in evaluation frameworks. As a way of illustrating these issues, we attempt to outline how evaluation is used in two areas of sectoral policy which will be key elements of future EU spatial planning: the trans-European transport network (T-TEN), and the Structural Funds.

A major concern in the development of a policy framework for T-TEN has been the selection of appropriate evaluation techniques in the planning of projects, corridors, and the network as a whole. A line of cleavage in this struggle opened between the advocates of cost-benefit analysis (CBA) and the advocates of strategic environmental assessment (SEA). Richardson (1997) observes that whilst the case for economic rationality has been put consistently and strongly by many actors in the process, the call for alternative evaluation came from the margins. It was perhaps not surprising that economics should be the appropriate discipline to evaluate measures that were designed principally to bring economic benefits. However, the increasing concern over the environmental impacts of T-TEN precipitated a campaign for broader impacts and options to be considered in making decisions at network and corridor levels (Richardson, 1997). The construction of strategic environmental assessment (SEA) and corridor analysis was weakened by a number of factors resulting from political processes. So, for T-TEN, a heated political struggle over the selection of evaluation instruments was central to the development of policy. The attempts to shape and control the evaluation process can be understood as struggles over the embedding of particular values, knowledges and power relations. The adoption of particular approaches and techniques in evaluation has created boundaries of inclusion and exclusion of knowledge, which potentially skews the outputs of evaluation. A range of evaluation tools is emerging with a mix of roles. Macro- and micro-economic evaluation is used to justify EU financial support for individual transport corridors, and to justify the EU's broad support for the T-TEN. Environmental evaluation tools (SEA and corridor analysis) will provide information on the overall impact of the networks, and different modal options at the corridor level. The outcome of a paradigmatic battle appears to have been the elevation of economic evaluation to hegemonic status. Economic criteria will be used to justify EU intervention in projects, whilst environmental knowledge will support decisions rather than carry any binding power. The value of international mobility will be more significant in influencing decision-making than the value of environmental impacts (Richardson, 1997).

Power is also found to be a crucial consideration in the process of evaluation. The hegemony of economics in evaluation would appear to favour the wide range of interests which are likely to benefit most from the construction of the trans-European networks. Concerns about the environmental impacts of the networks are marginalized. The particular methodologies further compound this exclusion of interests. CBA is a technical exercise which does not lend itself to the participation of multiple actors. Its values and workings are not transparent. SEA, alternatively, can be implemented readily within a participative planning framework. However, in the case of T-TEN, it does not appear that this possibility is being followed – rather SEA, like CBA, is being carried out as a desk exercise (Richardson, 1997). The processes by which these methodologies have been selected and incorporated into a policy framework are opaque, and do not benefit from public participation. The ground rules are being laid down for projects which will be implemented within member states, yet evaluation is not being used in a way which opens up the planning of projects, corridors and networks. It appears that innovations in evaluation in the T-TEN policy process will provide information about the broader environmental impacts of infrastructure development in major international corridors and networks as a whole, but will not create transparent processes of decision-making, or broaden the scope of the policy debate.

The nature of decision-making also lies at the heart of the Structural Funds, which by 1999 will have invested a total of 200 billion ecu in the assisted regions of Europe. It was widely acknowledged that the monitoring and control of community regional expenditure was inadequate prior to the 1988 reform of the Structural Funds (McEldowney, 1992), and at the time of the Maastricht Treaty the European Council had to request that greater emphasis should be given to monitoring and ex-ante and ex-post evaluation (Bachtler and Michie, 1995). Apart from the principle of better accountability per se, the evaluation issue was given added urgency in 1993 by the much greater volume of community resources being allocated to structural operations over the 1994–99 period, as the profile of economic and social cohesion in the EU was increased. A key issue for the evaluation of the Structural Funds has been the joint-funding of Member State projects, and since 1988, Member State regional programmes. There have been different expectations and traditions of evaluation between Member States, and the lack of detailed guidance from the Commission meant consensus was lacking over the objectives of evaluation and the methodologies to be employed. The Commission was to give a much clearer and co-ordinated view on evaluation after Maastricht. A clear distinction was drawn between three stages of Structural Fund assessment – appraisal, monitoring and evaluation. Bachtler and Michie (1995) indicate that although some sophisticated model-based approaches have been used, the majority of EU evaluation studies have tended to favour a combination of macro-level research involving ‘before and after’ numerical analyses of a limited range of socio-economic indicators, and micro-level, largely ‘non-experimental’ surveys involving the collection and basic analysis of a mix of qualitative and quantitative information through interviews, expert views and case studies. In spite of greater consensus in the approaches, the evaluation of

Structural Fund operations still presents a host of frequently cited methodological problems (Bachtler and Michie, 1995; McEldowney, 1992, 1997), but it has been the exercise of power, rather than the nature of knowledge, which has been the most contested area of Structural Fund assessments.

It was the duty of 'competent authorities' in the Member States to ensure that appraisal and evaluation were carried out in the most effective manner. This recognized the principle of subsidiarity in implementation, but also allowed national evaluation techniques and approaches to determine the nature of evaluation. The European Commission, in doing this, was seeking to emphasize and utilize the important notion of 'partnership', a feature central to the operations and objectives of the Structural Funds. Towards this end, the Commission established a specialist evaluation unit and invested in research on methodologies, the MEANS programme, to develop a 'European evaluation culture'. The general aim was to provide the Commission with a coherent body of evaluation guidelines and methods particularly adapted to partnership management. According to Monnier (1997), 'vertical' partnerships constitute a favourable context for the development of evaluation, and provide the means to carry out quality evaluations since situations of partnership favour pluralistic approaches. The outstanding feature of the pluralistic approach is that it takes into account the different points of view of people involved in the policy process. Partnerships are also seen to provide an opportunity for stakeholders' involvement and to enhance the quality of the process of evaluation. Monnier (1997) acknowledges that partnerships introduce a new series of constraints. Thus, one of the main challenges facing evaluations of activities implemented in partnership is to produce recommendations which, if not consensual, are at least seen by all partners as being credible (a multijudge-multicriteria technique).

In practice, the 1993 Regulations have only seen the ex-ante appraisals undertaken to date, but more generally the preparation of regional development programmes has frequently been seen as a highly confrontational exercise between the Commission and the Member States, or as in the UK, between levels of government within the Member State (Lloyd, 1996). As Eskelinen et al. (1997) claim, although the subsidiarity principle is emphasized in regional development programming, the supranational institutional practices often set the tone of Structural Fund operations. This concerns the diagnosis of the problems and the strategies for their alleviation, which necessarily implies the issue of compatibility of European interests with national and regional interests. Often, these interests have been served by evaluations which support the overriding hegemony of integration, based on economic cohesion more than social inclusion, and increasingly driven by fiscal restraint in the search for Monetary Union, as exemplified by SEM 2000 (Liikanen, 1997) and more broadly the new public sector management adopted in many Member States (Pollitt, 1995). However, Eskelinen et al. (1997) suggest that evaluations should not be considered merely as a task that the Member States have to 'carry out for Brussels', nor be primarily regarded as a way of securing the legitimization of the programmes. At best, evaluations might contribute to new forms of interaction between research and Governance, and thus influence the planning and implementation of regional policy measures. But

as Bachtler and Michie (1995) conclude, in a highly politicized context, with fifteen Member State administrations and a multiplicity of regional partners, the Commission's efforts to establish a commonly appreciated framework continues to be an uphill struggle.

The importance of these skirmishes is that they represent a series of struggles over the nature of knowledge as the basis for policy-making, and over the dynamics of power in the evaluation process. This can be understood as constructing a new basis of rationality or legitimacy for policy in Europe. Elsewhere, and more broadly, Giannakourou has argued that the construction of rationality in public policy-making at the EU level is being shaped by broader socio-political discourse. In particular, he has argued that in the development of EU spatial planning, principles of spatial equity have been subordinated to the over-riding needs of market integration (Giannakourou, 1996). However, the argument continues, an alternative locus of equity has emerged, which may be more appropriate to the European market: the emergence of a new inter-institutional, pluralist model of policy-making. Procedural equity now replaces spatial equity, with a new emphasis on horizontality rather than hierarchy. This can be seen in the partnership principle which applies to the structural funds and the shared responsibility principle for environmental policy. The logic and challenge here is that the emergence of EU spatial planning offers opportunities to explore new types of rationality, in a shift away from the comprehensive evaluation that has characterized national planning systems. Whilst we would accept that this shift is conceptually in line with a broader search for forms of governance beyond the state, and would welcome the challenge to adopt a positive role in constructing rationalities, we are less convinced about the extent of this shift in practice, and believe that the nature of this claimed equity warrants close examination.

Concluding Comments

The experience of evaluation in spatial policy is clearly critical to the development of the European spatial approach. As transnational planning takes shape, a major issue for planners (theorists as well as practitioners) will be to establish methods of planning which will reach across contrasting planning systems, and find some balance/synergy between the aims of each member state as well as the wider community. In this construction site, we will need to be critically aware of these dynamics, and their political sensitivity.

In the case of T-TEN, the evaluations in many instances are limited in their use as planning tools. They are usually indicative rather than binding, but constrained in their scope, and reductionist in nature. As constructed in the T-TEN policy process, even SEA, which offers great potential as a participative planning tool (Therivel and Partidario, 1996), fails in this respect. So in the development of EU spatial planning, there are several difficult challenges to be overcome if the planning framework is to do more than simply legitimize and enable the policies and visions of the single market. A central question, then, will be how are tools to be developed which really function as planning tools – in their methodology, normative content, transparency and deployment – rather

than simply serve to legitimate and expedite hegemonic visions, strategies and policies.

To accommodate the shift to pluralism, to whatever extent this occurs, evaluation methodologies will need to adapt to new types of policy processes, and be grounded in alternative rationalities. However, the rationality of the policy framework for T-TEN appears to be very much the old scientific rationality, whilst in the Structural Funds a trend towards new public management can be seen. There seems scope here for experimentation with fourth generation and communicative approaches to evaluation. A major challenge remains, though, which marks the distinction from evaluation in other areas. This is how spatial equity can be evaluated and then integrated effectively into planning policy through evaluation.

This leads us to a fundamental question. If pluralism is to become the model for evaluation, replacing traditional hierarchical approaches, then it follows that the values which become the basis for evaluation are arrived at through some pluralist process. What is absolutely critical in this process, then, is the extent of inclusion or exclusion of particular values. In a market-oriented paradigm, we may expect that the central values are likely to follow the needs of the market. Such values would be expressed through the multiple actors representing different interests. The inclusion of particular actors would thus shape the normative content of evaluation, determining the boundaries of the knowledge base, the scope, and potentially the outcomes of evaluation. In the T-TEN policy process, the nature of partnership has maintained a narrow scope for evaluation and policy development, which suggests caution in the partnership approaches being explored in the Structural Funds. Of particular relevance to the EU spatial planning is the subsidiarity principle, which recognizes the need for transparency of the decision-making process as a critical factor in strengthening the democratic nature of the EU institutions, and supporting the public's confidence in the administration. We conclude that reflections on the nature and use of evaluation are important to European spatial planning, and are urgently needed. There is a need for empirical studies and evidence from evaluation practice, at the national and European levels, which explore evaluation in planning in the context of emerging alternative theoretical paradigms.

Notes

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1. In referring to 'spatial planning', we recognize the use of other terms such as 'urban and regional planning', 'environmental planning', and 'town and country planning'. However, we avoid being drawn into debating the distinctions between these definitions, preferring an overarching term which is widely accepted.

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