

## **European Spatial Research and Planning**

**Andreas Faludi (editor)**

**Reviewed by**

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European Spatial Research and Planning, edited by Andreas Faludi, is the third volume published by the American Lincoln Institute of Land Policy exploring spatial planning, policy and research in Europe. The volume draws together a collection of writings based around research undertaken through the European Spatial Planning Observation Network (ESPON). As Faludi points out, ESPON “could easily be the most elaborate collaborative research effort feeding into planning policy ever undertaken” (P. 1) and bringing the results of this research to a wider audience is a welcome move.

On first sight the book is comprised of an eclectic mix of topics, but these provide the reader with strong appreciation of the breadth of the research undertaken through ESPON. The book also benefits from a critical appraisal of the strengths and weaknesses of the work undertaken through ESPON and, more especially, of the process itself. There is much reflection throughout the book, both explicit and implicit, of the tension between academic research objectives and the rhetoric and requirements of policy-makers involved in the process. Particularly notable here are the chapters by Hague and Hachmann and by Spiekermann and Wegner. One of the objectives of ESPON has been to develop a ‘community’ of collaborating researchers across the EU. One of the strengths of this book is its ability to open up this community to the wider world.

The second strength of the book is its consideration of key spatial policy debates within Europe. Not only does the book provide a valuable insight into the development of the territorial agenda as a policy consideration within the EU it also illuminates the process by which these policy agendas develop within the EU institutions. More specifically, there is particular consideration of topics such as polycentricity, territorial impact assessment and territorial cohesion which highlight both the potential of these concepts, but also the extent to which they have been driven by political considerations rather than built around academic findings. Readers interested in the development of European spatial policy will find much that is of relevance here.

The third strength of this book is to be found in the five chapters which summarise individual research projects undertaken through ESPON. Three of these consider the spatial dimension to topical themes: the demographic imperative; accessibility and connectivity, and natural hazards and climate change, whilst two take a more forward looking approach considering potential spatial scenarios and the relationship of the European Union and neighbouring states. Although covering only a small part of the overall research undertaken through ESPON these five chapters provide the reader with an introduction to the breadth of current considerations in European spatial planning. Each chapter contains a clear introduction to the spatial dimension of the topic and highlights

particular paradoxes that emerge as a consequence of taking this perspective. Liberally illustrated with maps the chapters vividly illustrate the spatial distribution of different concerns across the European space, although at times the level of detail can make the maps difficult to interpret.

Overall, *European Spatial Planning and Research* succinctly captures the rich material being developed through the ESPON research programme whilst also highlighting the debates, and some of the tensions, emerging in the field of European spatial planning. In his introduction to the book Andreas Faludi describes the ambition of ESPON as “a rather heroic venture with much solid achievement” (p.22). It is a phrase which can equally apply to this volume of work. The book contains much to recommend it as an introduction to the emerging field of European spatial planning. As such it should be of value to those interested in spatial planning research in Europe; to those students of spatial planning more generally and of European spatial planning in particular, and to those practitioners interested in expanding their consideration of this subject both by topic and by scale. If you are looking for some interesting provocations across a range of themes centred on European spatial planning then this volume is well worth dipping into.