Spatial planning, nationalism and territorial politics in Europe

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Authors:

Claire Colomb
Professor of Urban Studies and Planning
The Bartlett School of Planning
University College London (UCL)
Central House, 14 Upper Woburn Place
London WC1H 0NN,
UK
Email: c.colomb@ucl.ac.uk
https://iris.ucl.ac.uk/iris/browse/profile?upi=CMCOL44

John Tomaney
Professor of Urban and Regional Planning
University College London, The Bartlett School of Planning
The Bartlett School of Planning
University College London (UCL)
Central House, 14 Upper Woburn Place
London WC1H 0NN
UK
Email: j.tomaney@ucl.ac.uk
https://iris.ucl.ac.uk/iris/browse/profile?upi=JTOMA80

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Abstract: The paper explores whether spatial planning, infrastructure and territorial management issues and policies are an important field of mobilisation for nationalist actors in European sub-state contexts characterised by demands for more autonomy or independence: Scotland, Catalonia and Flanders. We show that such issues are sometimes mobilised to support the autonomist or separatist political agendas of sub-state nationalist parties, but that this varies significantly in the three cases, due to the different political ideologies of each nationalist party vis-à-vis the role of the state and the legitimacy of public policy interventions in private property, land development and market processes.

Introduction

Over the past decade nationalist parties have gained power at the regional level (alone or in coalitions) and augmented their claims for more autonomy or independence in a number of European countries. This resurgence of sub-state nationalism concerns the recasting of the 'politics of territorial solidarity' (Béland and Lecours, 2008). Although cultural claims and identity narratives remain important in regionalist and sub-state nationalist politics, challenges to existing constitutional and fiscal arrangements increasingly mobilise an economic discourse – a language of efficiency, competitiveness and good governance – as the basis of demands for more autonomy or independence (Rodríguez-Pose and Sandall, 2007). Simultaneously, new discourses about social policy and infrastructure requirements are promoted by nationalist parties to demand decentralisation of power and resources (Béland and Lecours, 2008; Colomb, et al., 2014).

Despite these trends, little academic attention has been paid to the link between sub-state nationalist claims and spatial planning, infrastructure and territorial management policies, even if the management of land use and territory is based on cultural and political choices about the built and natural environment, in which particular 'models of society' are materialised (Faludi, 2007). We should expect spatial planning to be an arena through which nationalist political actors (parties and civic movements)[1] invoke a distinctive 'collective territorial imagination' (Peel and Lloyd, 2007), and seek to distinguish the present, and future, character of their territory. In this paper we explore how spatial planning is mobilised by nationalist actors, through which they may seek to *envision* and shape their territory in sub-state contexts characterised by demands for more autonomy or independence. Specifically, we examine the territorial politics of spatial planning in Scotland (United Kingdom), Catalonia (Spain), and Flanders (Belgium). All three territories have achieved significant degrees of self-government, notably in spatial planning and cognate fields.

In contrast to traditional 'land-use planning' which is limited to the regulation of land and property uses, the location of activities and the control of development at the local scale, 'spatial planning' as a state activity engages with complex, multifaceted problems in an integrated way and aims to envision shared territorial futures. It seeks to balance demands for economic development, environmental protection and social and territorial equity through the distribution of key infrastructure and collective amenities, to protect areas of natural, environmental or historic value, and to co-ordinate the spatial impacts of sectoral policies such as transport, housing, and economic development (e.g. Albrechts, et al. 2003). The reality of planning policies and practices often differs, however, from this ideal definition of 'spatial planning'. Planning is an intrinsically political activity, shaped by shifting ideologies, governmental agendas and interest presentation, and attendant conflicts on the relationship between state, market and civil society (Nadin and Stead, 2008). Any form of (public) planning is an attempt to influence social, economic and environmental processes through various forms of regulation, policy instruments and modes of state action. Redistributive conflicts are at the heart of planning, which deals with fundamentally 'wicked problems' (Rittell and Webber, 1973) requiring trade-offs that benefit some interests and social groups at the expense of others (Campbell, 1996).

Below, we first review literature from a range of disciplines on the relationship between spatial planning (and territorial management activities), nation-building, state formation, regional decentralisation, and (sub-state) nationalist claims. We note the virtual silence in

classical studies of nationalism on how public policies shape the organisation of territory, a gap which this paper addresses. Second, we consider each of our cases in turn, analysing the extent to which nationalist parties have mobilised spatial planning and territorial management issues in their discourses, and whether they have developed distinctive planning and territorial management policy agendas as part of their claims. Finally, we identify similarities and differences between the three cases, outline possible explanatory factors and ponder further research.

Envisioning the nation: spatial planning and territorial politics in contested states

Planning and the making of national state territories in Europe

If the nation is an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1993), it is materialised in canals and ports, roads and railways, electricity grids and reservoirs. Long before the field of 'planning' was codified into extensive legislation, modern state formation involved the creation of postal services, statistical offices, cadastral and mapping exercises (Gellner, 1993; Scott, 1998). The planning and construction of strategic transport and communications infrastructure, together with the provision of public services, was a vital component of state-building in Europe (Williams and Smith, 1983). In France after 1870, as Eugen Weber (1976: 218) memorably states, roads and railways 'welded several parts into one' and turned 'peasants into Frenchmen'. Such infrastructure planning connected, bounded, subdued and unified the territory 'to assimilate or incorporate culturally distinctive territories' via a process of 'state building nationalism' (Breuilly, 1993). Similar practices were witnessed in Spain (Bel, 2010, 2011), the UK (Hewitt, 2011), and Belgium (De Vries, 2015), albeit reflecting variable national configurations of political and social forces.

In the 20th century, forms of territorial planning were instrumental in the formation and consolidation of 'Keynesian welfare states', alongside national demand management and social programmes which in Europe took a range of forms (Brenner, 2004). The provision of collective goods such as public housing, education and transport was intended to achieve social and territorial cohesion and required planning on a large scale. 'Spatial Keynesianism' typically involved the centralisation of regulatory capacities, the creation of uniform systems of local government and efforts to equalise public investment and infrastructure across the territory. But the way states have intervened to shape economy, society and the territory varies from country to country (Esping-Andersen, 1990). In planning studies, this is reflected in attempts to compare, classify and typologise national planning systems, practices and cultures in Europe (e.g. Newman and Thornley, 1996; CEC, 1997; Nadin and Stead, 2008; Knieling and Othengrafen, 2009).

The unifying ambitions of the central state were always frustrated, however, in part because 'high modernist schemes in liberal democratic settings must accommodate themselves sufficiently to local opinion in order to avoid being undone at the polls' (Scott, 1998: 102). 'Spatial Keynesianism' became destabilised by processes of economic restructuring unfolding from the 1970s onwards, which reinforced some pre-existing 'centre-periphery' cleavages which historic processes of national state formation had not erased (Rokkan and Urwin, 1983). Demands for decentralisation emerged or intensified in many West European countries and led to reforms of uneven pace and scope. Decentralisation to the 'meso-level'

of regions has been driven by various factors (Keating, 2013), not least by regionalist electoral insurgencies reflecting a contested 'territorial politics' (Keating, 2008). But decentralisation reforms did not quench demands for more autonomy: over the recent decades, in several European countries, regionalist/nationalist parties have won power at the regional level and strengthened their claims for increased autonomy or even outright independence, as we will see later.

(Sub-state) nationalism and the making of the territory

Nationalism is 'an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity for a population which some of its members deem to constitute an actual or potential "nation"' (Smith, 2001: 9). A nation, meanwhile, is 'a named human community occupying a homeland, and having common myths and a shared history, a common public culture, a single economy and common rights and duties for all members' (Ibid.: 13). Nation and state are not necessarily congruent – there are many 'stateless nations' and some multinational states. In classical discussions of nationalism, it is notable that the role of 'territory' is frequently omitted, or merely treated as a container for a (latent or existing) nation, whose borders may be contested. Smith (2001), however, emphasises the threefold importance of "homeland" in the emergence of nationalist claims. First, homeland acts

> as a title-deed, a political claim to a specified area of land and its resources, often in the teeth of opposition from rival claimants. From this perspective, the homeland is indispensable for economic well-being and physical security; and the exploitation of its agricultural and mineral resources becomes a prime nationalist consideration (p. 31-32).

Second, 'the homeland constitutes an historic territory, the ancestral land' of the people and the setting for 'foundational' historical events (and their sites of memory). Third, he highlights the profound effect of "landscapes" (and their representations) on the self-understanding of members of the nation.

According to Etherington (2003, 2010), the neglect of territory in foundational studies of nationalism is attributable to the tendency to naturalise the relationship between the two, and to focus on the temporal, rather than the spatial/geographical dimension of nation-building (2010: 323). 'National territorial belonging' is a distinctly modern phenomenon (Billig, 1995), shaped by the practices of states in 'territory making' and in the 'naturalisation of links between territories and people' (Paasi, 1997: 41). This is achieved, firstly, through the incorporation of physical features of the territory into representations of national identity and secondly, at a symbolic level, through nationalist (re)interpretations of the territory fusing the homeland with elements of identity such as culture, language, common myths and history, religious buildings, fields or even trees (Etherington, 2010). Among the instruments that have been used to legitimate nationalist territorial claims and promote territorial belonging are geography teaching, cartography (Agnew, 1987; Nogué, 1998), practices such as hiking; or the celebration and reproduction of landscapes in painting, poems, songs (Schama, 1995; Hooson, 1998; Nogué and Vicente, 2004).

Williams and Smith (1983) additionally emphasise how the *remaking of the environment* is a key part of nationalist projects:

> The manner in which nationalists 'activate' and mould their territories to fit their visions – the construction of ports and waterways, the regulation of law and rights, the use of development plans for industrialization, the strengthening of borders, the construction

of tariffs, the use of settlements, communication networks and trade flows to alter the physical and occupational balance within a territory testify to the shaping of 'national' space economies' (p. 514).

Additionally, the relationships between urban and rural areas, between city and country, have often been recurring themes in (sub-state) nationalist debates (Nel·lo, 2013). The conservative Catalanist cultural-political movement of the early 20th century, for example, was rooted in a mystified image of rural life and shaped by a fear of the potential social and political upheaval brought about by 'revolutionary', working-class Barcelona the distrusted modern industrial city (Nel·lo, 2013; 2015). This later filtered into an insistence on decentralising population and activities from the city and "balancing" the territory.[2]

There are few studies of (sub-state) nationalism, however, that examine how public policies shape the territory and the organisation of the "homeland" - either the policies of the larger state whose authority and legitimacy is contested, or the policies proposed or developed by insurgent (sub-state) nationalist parties. This is important because, 'if state processes are a reflection of distinctiveness and national identity, planning as a state process should be a reflection of and motivation for identity and distinctiveness' (Allmendinger, 2001: 44). If nationalist ideologies and movements have 'well-defined goals of collective self-rule, territorial unification and cultural identity' (Smith, 2001: 21), spatial planning and territorial management policies should be crucial in achieving those ends, as well as operationalising "national" socio-economic projects materialised in space.

Béland and Lecours (2008) have shown that debates on social policy have become central to processes of sub-state identity formation and territorial mobilization, because this policy field represents a tangible manifestation of the existence of a political community. In contentious regions such as Québec, Scotland or Flanders, nationalist leaders suggest that autonomy or independence is needed because their population has distinctive social and economic preferences and constitutes a separate "world of welfare" (Esping-Andersen, 1990). Here, we consider the extent to which nationalist actors also argue that their population have different preferences in terms of spatial and territorial organisation, development and policies. Below, we analyse the extent to which nationalist parties have mobilised spatial planning and territorial management issues in their political discourses, and whether they have developed (distinctive) planning and territorial management policy agendas as part of their claims. Beforehand, however, we provide an overview of the current state of decentralisation, spatial planning, and territorial political conflicts in the three regions analysed in this paper.

Decentralisation, regionalism/nationalism and spatial planning in Scotland, Catalonia and Flanders

Over the past decades, Scotland, Catalonia and Flanders have asserted historical claims for autonomy within their respective states and experienced decentralisation (see Table 1). Each territory now has its parliament and government and a broadly similar range of administrative powers: in addition to key competences such as language, culture and education, these include fields which shape the organization of the territory, e.g. rural development, regional transport, local government, housing, environment, tourism, economic development, land-use and spatial planning. In each case, with some variation, the central state retains competences in constitutional matters, foreign affairs, defence, social security, immigration and nationality, energy regulation, key national infrastructure networks, and taxation.

Table 1. Scotland, Catalonia and Flanders: basic institutional setting and planning system [Source: compiled by the authors]

	Scotland (UK)	Catalonia (Spain)	Flanders (Belgium)
Size	78,387 km^2 UK: 243,610 km^2	32,114 km^2 Spain: 505,992 km^2	13,522 km^2 Belgium: 30,528 km^2
Population	5.42 million (UK 66.04 million) *(mid-2017 estimate)*	7.54 million (Spain 46.73 million) *(Jan. 2018 estimate)*	6.55 million (Belgium 11.38 million) *(Jan. 2018 estimate)*
Density	69 inhab./km^2	235 inhab./km^2	484 inhab./km^2
Languages	English (Scottish Gaelic, Scots)	Catalan, Spanish	Flemish (Dutch)
Official structure of the nation-state	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland: unitary parliamentary constitutional monarchy with devolved governments	Kingdom of Spain: unitary parliamentary constitutional monarchy with 'autonomous communities'	Kingdom of Belgium: federal parliamentary constitutional monarchy
Key legislation for regional autonomy	Scotland Act 1998	Spanish Constitution of 1978: right to self-government of the 'nationalities and regions of Spain' = 17 autonomous communities + 2 autonomous cities. For Catalonia: 1979 and 2006 Statutes of Autonomy	1980, later expanded. 3 regions (Flanders, Wallonia, Brussels Capital) + 3 linguistic communities (Dutch, French, German). Flemish community & Flemish region are merged
Institutions of regional government	Since 1999: Scottish Parliament Scottish Government headed by First Minister	Since 1979: *Parlament de Catalunya* *Generalitat de Catalunya* headed by a President	Since 1980: *Vlaams Parlement* *Vlaamse Regering* headed by a Minister-President
Sub-administrative units	32 unitary authorities / local councils (regional councils 1975-1996, abolished)	4 provinces (*Diputacions*) 41 *comarques* (aggregations of municipalities) 947 municipalities	5 provinces 22 arrondissements 308 municipalities
Spatial planning competence acquired	1999	1979	1980/1988
Main spatial planning legislation	Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 Chapter 8 as amended by the Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006	*Llei de Política Territorial* 1983 *Llei d'Urbanisme* revised version of 2010 + various laws 2003-2010	Decrees on spatial planning of 1996 and 1999 (and revisions)
Strategic spatial planning at the regional level	National Planning Framework (NPF) 1st in 2004, 2nd in 2008, 3rd in 2014	*Pla Territorial General de Catalunya* 1995 *Plans Territorials Sectorials*	Spatial Structure Plan for Flanders 1997 New Spatial Policy Plan for Flanders in preparation since 2011
Sub-regional plans	4 city-regional Strategic Development Plans	*7 Plans Territorials Parcials*	5 Provincial Structure/Implementation Plans
Local plans	Development Plans for 32 council areas and 2 national parks	*Plans Directors Urbanistics* (supra-municipal) *Plans d'Ordenació Urbanística Municipal*	Municipal Structure Plans/Implementation Plans

Comparative studies of the effect of regional decentralisation in Europe have tested whether new 'territorial policy communities' and divergent policy trajectories have emerged as a result (Keating, 2005, 2013; Keating et al., 2009). Political scientists have focused on fields such as social policy, culture, language and education, but much less so on spatial planning and territorial management policies. In parallel, in the field of planning studies, comparative approaches to planning systems in Europe have primarily focused on the national scale, neglecting how distinctive planning agendas and practices may emerge at other spatial scales. Yet decentralisation is generally seen to facilitate the operation of strategic spatial planning, providing frameworks of political accountability and enabling the promotion of regional social, cultural, and environmental assets in ways which central governments have failed to achieve (Albrechts et al., 2003). In Scotland, Catalonia and Flanders, the decentralisation of planning competences was reflected in the enactment of new legislation (see Table 1) and led to signs of divergence in approaches to territorial management, at least at the level of policy discourses. A shift to more strategic spatial planning was witnessed in all three cases.

In the UK, devolution has allowed greater experimentation in planning strategies and delivery styles, generating a diversity of 'spatial plannings' *between* and *within* the four nations of the UK (Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendiger, 2006; Allmendinger and Haughton, 2010; Colomb and Tomaney, 2015; Tomaney and Colomb, 2018). Scotland always remained a distinct jurisdiction with its own body of planning law. Planning reforms introduced by the first two Scottish governments after 1999 (Labour-Liberal Democrat coalitions) – notably the *Planning, etc (Scotland) Act* 2006 – were generally similar to those enacted in England and Wales by the then New Labour government (Lloyd and Peel, 2009). The electoral victory of the Scottish National Party (SNP) in Scotland in 2007, and of a Conservative-led coalition in the UK in 2010, contributed to a divergence in planning agendas between England and Scotland, with a pro-market turn in the former and evidence of a more interventionist, pluralistic and corporatist policy-making approach in the latter (Tomaney and Colomb, 2013; 2018). The extent of this distinctiveness has, however, been debated (Keating, 2005; Allmendinger, 2006; Morphet and Clifford, 2014; Tomaney et al 2019).

Catalonia and Flanders have been described as pioneers in their country with regards to the emergence of more strategic approaches to planning. In Catalonia, between 2003 and 2010, while the Spanish government was promoting a deregulatory agenda, the regional government – led by a coalition of three left-wing parties – enacted several laws to create a wide-ranging system of spatial plans covering the whole territory, to protect coastal areas, tackle urban sprawl and support integrated urban regeneration in deprived neighbourhoods (Nel·lo, 2012). In Belgium, the decentralisation of planning competences led to divergent trajectories of spatial planning policies between the three regions. In Flanders, a shift from traditional land-use planning to new forms of strategic spatial planning was started by the CVP-SP-VU government (1991-1995) and then continued by the Christian Democrat-Socialist coalition (1995-1999) (Van den Broeck et al., 2014), in contrast to Wallonia where strategic spatial planning remained less developed. This was expressed by the 1997 Spatial Structure Plan for Flanders (Albrechts, 1999, 2001), which promoted polycentric development around the 'Flemish Diamond' (Brussels, Antwerp and Ghent), designated infrastructure corridors, and required urban growth boundaries to be drawn in order to halt sprawl (De Decker, 2011). The local planning permission system was tightened to restrict greenfield development (Van den Broeck and Verachtert, 2016).

The link between decentralisation and the rise of new forms of – and agendas for – spatial planning is not straightforward, however. In Catalonia, the *Generalitat* had possessed spatial planning competences since 1979 but only exercised them in significant ways in the 2000s. In all three cases, the shift to a spatial planning approach was enacted when left-of-centre political parties or coalitions came to power, and was influenced by a new generation of academic and professional planners, as well as environmental and social movements (Albrechts, 1999; Nel·lo, 2003; Nogué and Wilbrand, 2010; Van den Broeck and Verachtert, 2016). This shift, as expressed in the case of Flanders by a senior planning scholar involved in the process of preparing the Spatial Structure Plan, encouraged different government departments to "reflect on what kind of [region] they wished".

Despite the high degree of decentralisation achieved in the three territories, none has reached a stable consensus about the distribution of powers between different tiers of government. In all three cases, nationalist parties attained power, in coalition governments or alone: in 1999 (and more markedly in 2004) in Flanders, in 2007 in Scotland and in 2010 in Catalonia. Moreover, the post-2008 economic crisis fuelled renewed claims about the 'politics of territorial solidarity'. Central government austerity reinforced Catalan demands for greater fiscal autonomy on the grounds that the region (which accounts for one fifth of Spanish economic output) returns more to the centre than it receives (Bel, 2015). In Belgium, Flemish nationalists argued that Flanders should not be subsidising poorer Wallonia. Under the 'Barnett formula', Scotland benefits from the system of financial allocation to the devolved administrations of the UK. But grievances about the exploitation of oil resources on Scottish territory was an important theme in the independence referendum debates in 2014, in the context of austerity imposed by the UK Conservative government since 2010 (which affects Scotland in fields such as social security).

Table 2. Regional parties and governments in Scotland, Catalonia and Flanders, 1999-2019 [Source: compiled by the authors]

		Scotland	Catalonia	Flanders
Regional political parties advocating independence or maximum autonomy	Left		Candidatura d'Unitat Popular [Popular Unity Candidacy] (CUP)	
	Centre left	Scottish National Party (SNP)	Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya [Republican Left of Catalonia] (ERC)	
	Right		Partit Demòcrata Europeu Català [European Catalan Democratic Party] (*PDeCAT), known as* Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya [Democratic Convergence of Catalonia] (CDC) before 2016. *Note: CDC+UDC coalesced into Convergencia i Unió [Convergence and Union] (CiU) 1978-2015*	Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie [New Flemish Alliance] (N-VA) (previously VU)
	Far right			Vlaams Belang [Flemish Interest] (VB)
Other main regional political parties	Left	Scottish Greens	Iniciativa per Catalunya Verds & Esquerra Unida i Alternativa [Initiative for a Green Catalonia and United and Alternative Left] (ICV & EUiA) Catalunya en Comú (CatComú)–Podem [Catalonia in Common-We Can]	Groen [Green]
	Centre left	Scottish Labour Party Scottish Liberal Democrats	Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya [Socialist Party of Catalonia] (PSC)	Socialistische Partij Anders [Socialist Party-Differently] (sp.a) (previously SP)
	Right	Scottish Conservative Party	Unió Democràtica de Catalunya [Democratic Union of Catalonia] (UDC), dissolved 2017. *Note: CDC+UDC coalesced into Convergencia i Unió [Convergence and Union] (CiU) 1978-2015* Ciutadans [Citizens] (Cs) Partit Popular de Catalunya [Popular Party of Catalonia] (PPC)	Open Vlaamse Liberalen en Democraten [Open Flemish Liberals and Democrats] (Open Vld) (previously VLD) Christen-Democratisch en Vlaams [Christian Democratic and Flemish] (CD&V) (previously CVP)
	Far right			
Year of regional elections and subsequent governments	1999	Scottish Labour Party	CiU (CDC+UDC)	Coalition: VLD, SP, Agalev (Greens) and VU (until 2003)
	2000			
	2001			
	2002			
	2003	Scottish Labour Party	Coalition: PSC, ERC, ICV	
	2004			Coalition: CD&V, N-VA, sp.a and Open VLD
	2005			
	2006		Coalition: PSC, ERC, ICV	
	2007	Coalition: SNP-Scottish Liberal Democrats		
	2008			
	2009			Coalition: CD&V, N-VA and sp.a
	2010		CiU	
	2011	SNP		
	2012		CiU	
	2013			
	2014			Coalition: N-VA, CD&V and Open Vld
	2015		Coalition: Junts pel Sí (CDC+ERC), with ad hoc support from CUP	

2016	SNP	
2017		Coalition: Junts per Catalunya *(PDeCAT+independent*), ERC
2018		
2019		Coalition: N-VA, CD&V and Open Vld

Spatial planning in sub-state nationalist agendas

We now analyse to what extent nationalist parties have mobilised spatial planning and territorial management issues in their discourses, and whether they have developed (distinct) planning and territorial management policy agendas as part of their claims. Our analysis is based on exploratory research conducted in the three territories between 2013 and 2018 using two main methods:

- qualitative content analysis of primary documentary sources including the electoral manifestos of the main nationalist parties at regional elections since 1999 (Scotland), 2004 (Flanders) and 2010 (Catalonia); key official publications on the Scottish referendum and on the right to self-determination in Catalonia; strategic planning policy documents; and statements by relevant organised interests (e.g. civil society organisations or professional associations in fields related to planning).
- 30 semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders involved in spatial planning and territorial management policies: officials from the (regional) ministries of planning; academic experts; elected members of the regional parliaments (in particular from nationalist parties); and representatives from professional planning associations and related interest groups.

Scotland

Following the 2011 elections, the SNP was able to form a majority government on the promise of a referendum on Scottish independence. In October 2012 the UK's Prime Minister and Scotland's First Minister signed an agreement on the terms of the referendum, which took place in September 2014. The prospect of establishing a progressive social policy in Scotland was at the core of the SNP's argument for independence (Béland and Lecours, 2008). The SNP is generally described as a moderate, left-of-centre party. Its supporters often associate Scottish national identity with notions of egalitarianism, social justice and progressive social policy preferences (Béland and Lecours, 2008), including greater support for state intervention, although the supposed prevalence of such values in Scottish society is debated (McCrone, 2017).

Spatial planning in Scotland acquired a relatively high profile on the agenda of the SNP governments, although it figured only intermittently in the party's electoral manifestos during this period. From 2010 onwards, the UK government – a coalition of Conservatives and Liberal Democrats – set out to reform the English planning system through the 2011 *Localism Act*, which dismantled strategic spatial planning initiatives in England. A divergence between the planning policy agendas of the Scottish and UK governments thus became more apparent (Tomaney and Colomb, 2013), although some similarities remained in the discourses of the two governments (e.g. an emphasis on 'sustainable economic growth' and efficiency in the planning permission process). Yet unlike the anti-planning rhetoric of the Conservatives, the SNP government was keen to state the value of planning as a positive means of steering spatial development. Respondents from the public and private sectors and from various political parties remarked that that there seems to be a "national consensus" about planning in Scotland, and that Scottish Conservatives have not sought to dismantle or vilify planning as has, at times, been the case in England.

The strategic and visionary element of planning supports the SNP's vision of an independent Scotland. The 3rd *National Planning Framework* (NPF) for Scotland (Scottish Government,

2014), published just before the independence referendum, contains a 30-year vision for the territory in support of sustainable economic growth and the transition to a low-carbon economy. It was presented as the spatial expression of the SNP government's Economic Strategy (Scottish Government, 2010), and emphasised the need to balance economic growth with environmental protection, the stewardship of natural resources and the development of renewable energy. Additionally, themes of social, regional and inter-generational equity figured prominently in the NPF and the Economic Strategy in ways that were absent in the UK government's *National Planning Policy Framework for England* (DCLG, 2012; Tomaney and Colomb, 2013). Interviewees stated that there were time pressures to finish NPF3 before the referendum of September 2014, and that it had to be "aspirational, offer something for all of Scotland, and avoid controversial and divisive developments" (Senior Planner, Scottish government). The preparation of NPF3 generated, according to an official involved in the process, healthy discussions about the geography of Scotland and how certain parts of Scotland are represented. The identification of strategic national development projects as part of the document was, additionally, characterised by relative consensus. For instance, major infrastructure proposals for the Highlands and Islands were all accepted, in order to counterbalance the weight of Central Belt.

The NPF (and associated policy guidance) is supposed to shape planning decisions in a range of sectors such as economic development, regeneration, energy, environment, transport and digital infrastructure. Whether it effectively influences the investment decisions of public authorities and private investors remains unproven. The Scottish Government's room for manoeuvre is limited by its inability to borrow directly on capital markets to fund infrastructure projects, and the UK Parliament's remaining competences in key policy areas such as taxation, energy and airports. Energy policy is a source of contention because the SNP rejects nuclear power and fracking for shale gas. The devolution of spatial planning allowed the Scottish Government to foster a *de facto* renewable energy policy (which already makes up 40% of Scotland's electricity generation), by promoting the development of wind farms, banning fracking and refusing the building of new nuclear power stations. But the Scottish Government's ambitions come up against the constraints of the national electricity grid, which remains a UK government regulatory responsibility.

Prior to the 2014 Referendum, the Scottish Government published its prospectus for independence in a document entitled *Scotland's Future* (Scottish Government, 2013). It set out its ambitions 'for the type of economy and society that captures Scotland's distinct values and build distinct economic, industrial and social policies which reflect these aims' (p. 94). It asserted that independence would allow 'an alternative economic policy' to that 'which disproportionately benefits London and the South East of England' (p. xii), leading to stronger connections between urban and rural, island and mainland, national and international. Independence would also enable the alignment of transport policy with energy policy to achieve declared carbon reduction targets.

Much of the case for independence rested on the benefits arising from full control of Scotland's rich natural resources, such as the seabed and oil and gas reserves, claimed to be 'central to our identity as a country and as a people' (p. 288). It was proposed that independence would 'enable a regulatory approach that is tailored to specific Scottish conditions that influence the costs of keeping homes warm, such as our climate, our mix of urban, rural and remote communities and our distinctive housing stock' (p. 169). It was asserted that 'the harsher Scottish climate and the challenges of heating remote homes call

for an ambitious approach to energy efficiency and carbon emissions reduction' (p. 167). It is worth nothing that this narrative is, in the UK context, not unique to Scotland: Jones and Ross (2016) have analysed how nationalists in Wales have claimed that 'sustainable development that is allegedly more attuned to Welsh national values and identities', and 'is being used to imagine new and possibly more inclusive kinds of futures for the Welsh nation' (p. 54).

The Scottish independence referendum took place on 18 September 2014. Independence was rejected by 55% to 45%. After the referendum, there were further changes to the devolution settlement as the full provisions of the 2012 *Scotland Act* were rolled out. A commission was set up to prepare proposals for further devolution (Smith Commission, 2014), whose recommendations were included in the revised *Scotland Act*, 2016. It gave extra power to the Scottish Parliament, e.g. the management of the Crown Estate in Scotland, the setting of rates and thresholds of Income Tax, Air Passenger Duty, the licensing of onshore oil and gas extraction, and rail franchising.

After 2014, some planning-related activities of the Scottish Government strengthened the contrast with the planning agenda in England, in particular through the *Community Empowerment Act* 2015 and the *Land Reform Act* 2016, which grants some power to the Scottish government to force the sale of private land to community bodies so that land 'can be best managed in the public interest to ensure it is of benefit to all of the people of Scotland' (SNP, 2015: 32), a contentious issue in a country where large landlords historically own a sizable part of the territory (for a discussion, see Wightman, 2019). These reforms illustrate an approach to 'localism' and community empowerment by the SNP which is markedly different than the 'new localism' agenda of the UK government in England. A further reform of Scottish planning legislation was announced by the Scottish government, with a new *Planning (Scotland) Bill* presented to the Parliament in 2017. The legislation had a fractious passage through the Scottish Parliament, with the government claiming it streamlined the planning process, while opponents asserting it centralised power at the expense of local councils and communities (BBC News, 2019; Tomaney et. al. 2019).

Catalonia

In 2006 a new Statute of Autonomy for Catalonia was approved in the Spanish parliament, but judicially challenged by the right-wing *Partido Popular* (PP). In 2010 the Spanish Constitutional Court culled significant parts of the Statute, which led to massive protests in Catalonia and an increase in support for independentist parties (Table 2). Following the regional election of 2010 (and others in 2012, 2015 and 2017), Catalonia has been governed by pro-independence parties spanning from the far left to the right of the political spectrum (see Table 2), while the Spanish government was governed by the PP from 2011 until 2018. The Catalan separatist movement is additionally fuelled by powerful civil society associations and movements (such as the Catalan National Assembly), able to mobilise large crowds for the Catalan National Day on 11th September (Crameri, 2015). These organisations helped the Catalan government organise a referendum on self-determination on 1 October 2017, albeit declared illegal by the Spanish government. The vote was violently repressed by the Spanish police and followed by the temporary suspension of Catalan regional autonomy and enforcement of direct rule until new regional elections in December 2017, at which pro-independence parties, reflecting the deep divisions in Catalan society, retained only a small majority.

Three phases can be identified in the planning and territorial management policy agenda of Catalan governments since 2010. The years 2010-2012 were marked by a liberalising approach. The economic crisis was used as a legitimising argument to support large-scale urban development projects that were highly controversial in socio-economic and environmental terms. New laws were passed to partly deregulate development control procedures. Austerity led to the freezing of the urban regeneration programme set up by the previous government. The revision of the General Territorial Plan of Catalonia - started in 2009 - was halted and some planning-related public agencies were dissolved. Nevertheless, several laws passed by the previous government were retained, in particular on landscape protection.

Between 2012 and 2017, the liberalising drive of the Catalan government was somewhat weakened, partly to secure the support of other pro-independence parties (ERC and CUP, respectively on the centre-left and far left of the political spectrum) in the governing coalition. The manifestos of the main Catalan parties for the 2012 and 2015 regional elections reveal a degree of discursive convergence around objectives such as sustainable mobility; a compact urban model; tackling climate change; better management of natural resources; landscape protection; supporting renewable energy; and increasing affordable housing (with the exception of the PP, which does not mention these issues). In practice, however, as revealed in interviews with members of the Catalan Parliament, there have been tensions within the governing coalition regarding particular policy issues (e.g. ring roads and motorway extensions).

The regional election campaign of 2015 focused on the right to self-determination and brought to power a coalition named *Junts pel Sí* ("Together for Yes"), which focused its activities on enforcing that right and setting a 'roadmap' to independence. This generated fierce opposition from non-independentist parties, and meant that debates on key substantive policy issues, largely, have taken the back seat in the Catalan Parliament. Draft proposals for a new regional 'Law of Territory' and 'Law on the Planning of Coastal Areas' were launched in 2014-15, but progress stopped in 2017 after the 'unauthorised' referendum. The Catalan government's White Paper on the so-called 'national transition' (GenCat, 2014) focuses on the steps to be taken to exercise the right to self-determination and achieve independence. It refers to the creation of 'state structures' (e.g. tax collection and social security institutions) as well as measures to ensure the continuity of energy, transport and water supply. But it does not contain references to any substantive policy objectives for its nation-building project, which contrasts starkly with the detailed policy debates which preceded the Scottish referendum.

The pro-independence forces in Catalonia mainly mobilise claims about national identity and sense of community (i.e. language and education policy); economic viability (fiscal relations with the central state); and future opportunities in a global world (issues of infrastructure, especially transport) (Bel, 2015). Spatial planning in a strict sense does not figure prominently in those arguments. None of the electoral manifestos of pro-independence parties included an overall vision of the territory in the sense of a 'territorial model for Catalonia' which would offer a framework for all public policies (SCOT, 2015: 6), with the possible exception of the left-wing anti-capitalist party, CUP, which offers a radical vision of decentralised endogenous development and de-growth for Catalonia, with radical policies in relation to energy, water and food sovereignty. The strong territorial imbalances within Catalonia remain surprisingly unaddressed (e.g. rural depopulation or the lack of attention to the Southern part of

Catalonia, often forgotten in nationalist imaginary). As a senior Catalan planning scholar argued in a 2016 interview, "spatial planning is not used for a national project".

The lack of attention of the pro-independence political forces towards spatial planning contrasts strongly with the central importance of urban planning and related fields in the agenda of the parties which have governed Barcelona for most of the post-Franco period: the Socialist Party until 2011, and after 2015, the new political force Barcelona *en Comú*. The latter has placed the right to housing, improvements to public transport, tackling air pollution, public energy and water management, and the return to a more 'socially focused' urban planning at the heart of its agenda, arguing that distributional questions should come first in the city's politics – not the 'national' question. Additionally, an emerging metropolitan-scale planning vision (Pla Estratègic Metropolità de Barcelona) has been developed by a not-for-profit association promoted by Barcelona City Council and the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona, as an instrument for identifying the potential of the city-region's territory in the medium term, thus pointing towards a specifically metropolitan 'planning imaginary'.

These differences between the urban/metropolitan and regional political agendas reflect a long-standing historical cleavage in the electoral-political geography of Catalonia, between the Barcelona metropolitan region and the rest of the territory. In the former, left-wing, non-independentist parties gain the most votes, whereas in the latter, regionalist or pro-independence parties (both right- and left-wing) are most supported. The share of the votes for pro-independence parties has, however, increased in Barcelona from the early 2010s onwards. These parties have had to change their traditionally hostile vision of the city, and of metropolitan and urban issues, as a result. As expressed by a member of the Catalan Parliament from the ERC party interviewed in 2016, there is "no new nation without a strong capital city".

Territorial management issues are nonetheless present in the narrative of pro-independence parties in relation to three themes. First, there are strong grievances about the 'unfair' fiscal transfers and distribution of public investment by the Spanish state between Autonomous Communities. Catalan governments have continually criticised the centralising transport investment policies of successive Spanish governments, historically favouring the convergence of networks towards Madrid in what Bel (2010, 2011) terms a consolidation of the 'radial State' since the 17th century. Nationalists declaim the lack of financial support by the Spanish state for the Mediterranean rail corridor (linking the South of Andalusia through Catalonia to the Rhone Valley) and for the secondary railway network in Catalonia, while demanding control over airport and port management. Second, the Spanish state and Catalan actors have clashed over the management of natural resources, notably water; such as the proposal by the PP government in 2000 to redirect water from the River Ebre which generated strong protests in Catalonia (although the then CiU-led Catalan government initially supported the proposal). Third, left-wing, pro-independence Catalan political parties and social groups associate control over natural resources with broader claims for a more egalitarian and ecologically-sensitive national project, reflecting historical linkages between the Catalan environmental movement and the Left-wing part of the independentist movement (Nogué, 1998).

Flanders

Flemish nationalism has its origins in the demand for equal status for the Dutch language in Belgium in relation to French, which was the language of the 19th century ruling elite. After the Second World War, the rise of Flemish nationalism prompted the transformation of the Belgian state through a series of six constitutional reforms between 1970 and 2011, which have failed to quench Flemish demands for more autonomy. At present, around 58% of the population of Belgium is Dutch-speaking and 31% French-speaking. In the early 2000s, two Flemish nationalist parties became increasingly popular: the *Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie* (N-VA), a right-wing party founded in 2001 out of the previous *Volksunie* (1954–2001), and the *Vlaams Belang* (VB), a far-right party (earlier called *Vlaams Blok*, that gained strength in the late 1980s), which began to lose popularity after 2009 but regained 12% of the vote in the 2019 Belgian federal elections.

In 2004 the Flemish regional elections brought to power a coalition of Christian-Democrats, Social-Democrats and the N-VA. Since then the N-VA has continued to attract a strong vote at local, regional and national elections, and been part of all Flemish governing coalitions (Table 2). The N-VA does not openly advocate independence, but a confederal model for Belgium which would move 'the centre of gravity of the socio-economic policy … to the federated entities so that they can implement a policy at the level of their own inhabitants and economy' (N-VA, 2019: np). Its manifestos express grievance about the level of fiscal redistribution between Flanders and Wallonia. The N-VA favours low tax and limited state intervention, in particular in land use management and private property rights. Under the leadership of Bart De Wever, the party moved to the right, with tougher stances on immigration and security. In its 2009 regional election programme, the N-VA also described itself as a 'green' party, advocating support for public transport and renewable energy – an emphasis which was lost thereafter.

Since 2004, Flanders has been governed by coalitions between the Christian Democrats (CD&V), Flemish nationalists (N-VA), and other parties (Table 2). The Flemish political consensus is often defined as 'right-wing', whereas the largest political party in Brussels and Wallonia is the *Parti Socialiste*. The notion of 'right-wing Flanders' and 'left-wing Wallonia' is a powerful trope in Belgian politics, although, arguably, this has less to do 'with "objective" socio-economic differences, but rather with a curiously persistent identity construction' (De Wever, 2011: 4). In the coalition system, individual ministers have extensive autonomy over their policy domains. The ministry of Spatial Planning has moved between the VLD (1999-2009), N-VA (2009-2014) and CD&V (2014-2019).

In this political context, since the 2000s land use planning has been blamed for hindering development, which has led to reforms facilitating greenfield development (Van den Broeck and Verachtert, 2016). The strategic spatial planning approach developed in the 1990s was weakened and spatial planning was reoriented towards the protection of private property, hampering 'the capacity of government to implement a coherent spatial policy and collective spatial projects' (Van den Broeck and Verachtert, 2016: 388). This reflected historic Flemish social and cultural preferences for private home ownership and unconstrained individual housebuilding, expressed in a popular distrust of government interference in planning (De Vries, 2015). This has been reflected in the enactment of widespread exceptions to zoning restrictions, a lax enforcement of planning regulations, local clientelist practices, and illegal constructions (Van den Broeck and Verachtert, 2016).

In 2011, a process was launched to replace the Spatial Structure Plan for Flanders by a new 'Policy Plan for Town and Country Planning' (DRV, 2016), still underway at the time of writing. A Green Paper (DRV, 2012) set out key principles for the future plan, including the rejection of urban sprawl and preference for the protection of green spaces. A 2016 White Paper further acknowledged the spatially dispersed, sprawling and car-dependent urbanization pattern of Flanders, defining the key objective of the future plan as 'doing more with less space' (DRV, 2016) by stopping all new construction on unused open space by 2040. In July 2018, the Flemish Government approved the 'Strategic Vision' of the future Flanders Spatial Policy Plan (DRV, 2018), which confirmed the commitment to reduce greenfield development, although this has been undermined in practice by recent planning decisions (Tomaney and Colomb, 2014) and the pro-growth political agenda of Flemish governments since 1999.

The 'Strategic Vision' does not include any map or visualisations of future development patterns for the whole Flemish territory. Moreover, it contains a strong localist rhetoric, calling for 'provinces, cities and municipalities [to be] given more responsibilities' to 'determine for themselves which town and country planning projects they will focus on'. It abandons 'the notion of a strict planning concept, imposed by the Government of Flanders' (p. 30), and limits the role of the Flemish government to determining large-scale transformation projects. Inter-municipal cooperation is proposed to deal with issues such as water management, housing development and mobility management, but with little indication of how it should be incentivised.[3]

More notably, there has been little inter-regional cooperation at the political level between the three regions of Belgium on key, trans-regional planning issues. Before the decentralization of planning to the regions, the Belgian national planning system initially permitted a national plan, but none was ever produced. The lack of co-ordinated strategic planning to guide the growth of the Brussels metropolitan area is a particularly pressing issue, as its functional urban economy extends far beyond the administrative boundaries of the capital city-region. The Flemish government has been standing 'with its back to Brussels', as expressed by a senior planning scholar. Land use planning in the Flemish municipalities around Brussels is highly politicised and has been used as a mean of pursuing 'language wars' (Boussauw et al., 2013). As French has become the majority language in Brussels, in the Dutch-speaking 'Flemish Fringe' that encircles the city, there is resistance to the growth of new Francophone communities. The growth of the Brussels functional urban area and extended commuter flows is seen as posing a threat to the national (linguistic) identity of Flanders, and Flemish municipalities have used restrictive planning policies to contain the 'francisation' of their territory; for example, by attaching conditions to the sale of public land or social housing allocation (stipulating that prospective buyers or tenants should have a link to the municipality), or by setting height limits to new housing development (as done in the district of Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde). In December 2011, the Flemish Government adopted a specific development perspective for the 'Flemish strategic area around Brussels' (VSGB), which delineates an urban growth boundary aimed at containing the growth of Brussels. The (Socialist) Minister-President of the Brussels-Capital Region subsequently filed a complaint with the federal Council of State against this plan in the summer 2012.

Conclusions. Spatial planning, sub-state nationalism and the politics of territory in Europe

The three cases explored here reveal that spatial planning and territorial development issues *can* be mobilised politically to support the autonomist or separatist political agendas of sub-state nationalist parties. However, our research shows that such issues are rarely central compared to social or linguistic policy issues, although as the Flanders case shows, planning laws can be used as a means to prosecute language wars. Taking Béland and Lecours' (2008) analysis one step further, we showed that spatial planning and territorial management issues gained prominence in such agendas, sometimes indirectly, because they contain redistributive demands linked with inter-territorial fiscal transfers and, centrally, because they reflect the relationship between state, market and civic society in the management of land, wherein "models of society" (Faludi, 2007) and "worlds of welfare" (Esping-Andersen, 1990) are expressed. But, in none of the three cases do we witness the formulation of a cohesive and comprehensive spatial vision for the whole territory, although the NPF (in the Scottish case) comes closest to that. The absence of a strong spatial planning strategy 'does not necessarily imply the absence of a collective spatial project' (De Vries, 2015: 2160) – though it may be an implicit one. The development of a coherent and overarching strategic spatial strategy and policy – if it exists – remains overshadowed by decisions taken in other policy areas and at other scales of government – for example large-scale road and rail infrastructure development, retail siting, and property taxation. In Flanders, for example, the 1997 RSV provided a long-term vision for the region but played a marginal role in the allocation of public resources (Van den Broeck, 2008; Tomaney and Colomb, 2014) – reflecting the 'missing link' between strategic plans, public budgets and projects witnessed in many other contexts (see Moore-Cherry and Tomaney, 2019, for the Irish case).

When comparing the findings from the three cases, it is clear that nationalist parties mobilise spatial planning and territorial management to varying extents and in diverse ways. In Scotland, the SNP's planning discourse has been more strategic, interventionist and positive compared to that of the N-VA in Flanders. The claim that Scottish political culture is more consensual, egalitarian and favourable to state intervention (than its English counterpart) figured prominently in the case for Scotland's independence. There is evidence of the performativity of such proclaimed values in the Scottish strategic planning discourse, in part as a reaction to the 'anti-planning' rhetoric of the Conservatives in England. In Flanders, the N-VA – in coalition with other right-wing political parties and influenced by landowners and the building sector (Van den Broeck and Verachtert, 2016) – has favoured the liberalisation of planning controls and shown scepticism about previous strategic planning approaches. The case of Catalonia is more ambiguous: because the three main parties advocating the right to self-determination are located from the radical left (CUP), via the moderate left (ERC) to the right of the political spectrum (PDCat), there are differences in policy agendas in relation to planning and territorial management policies, but also a degree of 'centrist' consensus because of the coalition dynamics between these different parties.

Our analysis thus shows that the observed *differences* between the three cases seem to depend on the political ideology of each nationalist party vis-à-vis the role of the state and the legitimacy of public policy interventions in market processes. Differences are rooted in the relative value which parties attach to particular objectives such as sustainability, the protection of private property, economic growth etc. The positioning of each party on the traditional *left-right* political spectrum, rather than their broader 'nationalist' disposition,

seems to be more decisive in influencing the extent to which spatial planning is mobilised in their political discourse and policy agenda. In that regard, it is significant that the shift to strategic spatial planning which happened in the 1990s-2000s in the three regions was *not* pressed by regionalist or nationalist parties, but by coalitions of centrist, left-wing and/or green parties which broadly shared a progressive social-democratic and environmental agenda in relation to questions of territorial management, at a moment when existing models of urban growth and resource consumption were becoming increasingly criticised (in particular in Flanders and Catalonia).

This paper addresses the relative absence of a concern with the production of the territory in classic studies of nationalism, by focusing on the production of the national space through public policies related to the planning and organisation of the territory. The literature on nationalism notes the importance of the "homeland" to the nationalist project (Smith, 2001) and pays particular attention to the discursive aspects of nation building, but we noted how the spatial planning and geographical dimensions are comparatively neglected. In this paper we have sought to redress this lacuna using the lens of spatial planning to contribute to analyses of contemporary forms of sub-state nationalisms in Europe. Nations are imagined communities. We have shown how the 'shaping of territory' is an important aspect of nationalist politics in the three cases (albeit to a variable degree). Spatial planning has been an instrument to that end, although strategic ambitions often are defeated by day-to-day *realpolitik*. This paper thus draws attention to the role of spatial planning in envisioning and forming the national territory, while noting the considerable variation in how spatial visions are developed and subsequently materialised, reflecting the way national priorities are contested often along conventional left-right axes. We suggest this is a fruitful area for future comparative studies.

In future research, more attention needs to be paid to the social actors and economic interest groups which form the constituencies of regionalist and nationalist parties: first, their geographical distribution (which can offer insights into intra-regional divides, e.g. between metropolitan areas and other parts of the territory); second, how their characteristics influence their attitude to land, property, ecological issues or their pro- or anti-urban bias. As emphasised by De Vries in his insightful comparison of Dutch and Flemish planning cultures, the 'combination of urban morphology, actor constellations and societal values can shape the planning project in particular countries or regions', in particular 'the size and orientation of key actors in the land and property development process' (2015: 2161). There is a need to unpack the fraught spatial metaphors which are commonly used in political and media discourses through the 'recurring substitution of *social* actors with *territorial* abstractions': '"rich regions", "poor regions", "Catalonia", "Spain", "Madrid" ... are metaphors continuously used to mask the fact that what is in competition are not territories, but social groups, economic interests and political projects' (Nel·lo, 2013b: 49-50, authors' translation from Spanish). Finally, while we focused here on policy discourses and agendas, further inquiry is needed into the implementation and impacts of policies enacted by governments led (or co-led) by nationalist parties, and into the extent of policy distinctiveness in spatial planning and territorial management - as there is often a large gap between promises and the reality of public policy implementation.

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[1] We use the word 'nationalist' in a neutral, non-pejorative sense to refer to political and social forces which advocate more autonomy, or secession, for their region/nation from the larger state of which it is a part.
[2] We are grateful to one of the anonymous referees for raising this point.
[3] The regional government has set up some funding to support such inter-municipal cooperation projects (e.g. Strategic Projects REKOVER in Kortrijk, Regionet in Leuven, the City Region of Turnhout and the City Region of Antwerp).