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The Europeanisation of territorial governance and spatial planning: a tool for analysis

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Inspire Policy Making with Territorial Evidence

Scientific Report

Building the next generation of research on territorial development

Papers presented at the ESPON Scientific Conference
on 14 November 2018 in London, United Kingdom

September 2019

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4. Monitoring integrated territorial development

4.1. The Europeanisation of territorial governance and spatial planning: a tool for analysis

Giancarlo Cotella and Umberto Janin Rivolin¹³

Key words: Europeanisation, territorial governance, spatial planning systems, European territorial governance

i) Introduction

The Europeanisation of territorial governance and spatial planning (TG&SP) concerns both the possible influence of the European Union (EU) on national TG&SP systems and the contextual shaping of wider European territorial governance. This contribution presents the framework adopted by the COMPASS project to understand and analyse the Europeanisation of TG&SP in the 32 countries composing the ESPON space.

Section ii) proposes a model that conceptualises TG&SP systems as complex institutional technologies subject to socio-economic, cultural and political changes and embedded within a wider EU territorial governance framework. Section iii) presents in more detail the three types of top-down influences (structural, instrumental and discursive top-down) identifiable through the model, whereas section iv) describes the types of bottom-up influences (discursive bottom-up and practical) and a horizontal influence. Section v) rounds off the contribution, reflecting on the application of the model and its added value.

The proposed approach constitutes the first attempt to represent and analyse Europeanisation in the field of TG&SP in a comprehensive and systematic way. The results of the analysis led to circumstantial recommendations for policy-makers at various levels, with the aiming of enabling better cross-fertilisation between domestic TG&SP and EU Cohesion Policy.

ii) Theoretical foundations: territorial governance and spatial planning systems as institutional technologies

TG&SP systems can be conceived as “institutional technologies” that allow and rule, in a given institutional context (e.g. a state), the spatial organisation of economic development and social life (Janin Rivolin 2012). To fulfil their function, they operate “as a hinge between the government system ... and the spatial production and consumption system” (Mazza 2003:54, authors’ translation), and can change over time driven by external (e.g. socio-economic change) and internal (e.g. political choice) factors.

This concept encompasses the notions of “institution” and “technology”, both recognised in science as subject to evolutionary processes of innovation. In brief, TG&SP systems can be seen as end products of a creative selection process of trial and error based on “(i) first, the generation of variety (in particular, a variety of practices and rules); (ii) second, competition and reduction of the variety (of rules) via selection; (iii) third, propagation and some persistence of the solution (the system of rules) selected” (Moroni 2010:279). However, “in practice the process to adopt changes is rather slow and restrained by high transactions costs” (Fürst 2006:31), because of path dependence and the complexity of institutional processes in the context of political conflict and socio-economic dynamics.

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In short, the variety of practices generated from the social experience of spatial development in an institutional context is the continuous trigger of this evolutionary process. As a result of this variety, successful experiences can arise, as a consequence of a competitive and iterative discourse concerning the technical and political assessments of territorial governance outcomes. Specific ideas and procedures may become “hegemonic”, possibly leading to substantial and/or procedural changes in the system structure, i.e. the overall set of constitutional and legal provisions allowing the operation of the system. This institutional codification leads to the propagation of the selected solutions, with the established tools (e.g. plans and other devices and procedures) becoming the basis of the (new) operational framework for practice (see Janin Rivolin 2012).

Although the EU has no formal TG&SP competences, evidence of an ongoing process of European territorial governance (Zonneveld et al. 2012) encourages the adaptation of the same conceptual framework to its wider institutional context. European territorial governance can be imagined as a process in which one supranational and various national cycles (as many as the EU member states) are simultaneously active (Figure 4.1.1). As it will be described in the following sections, this representation may serve as an analytical tool suitable to identify the relations between the national and supranational contexts, and to consequently explore all possible influences concurring to the Europeanization of TG&SP.

iii) “Downloading” influences and domestic change

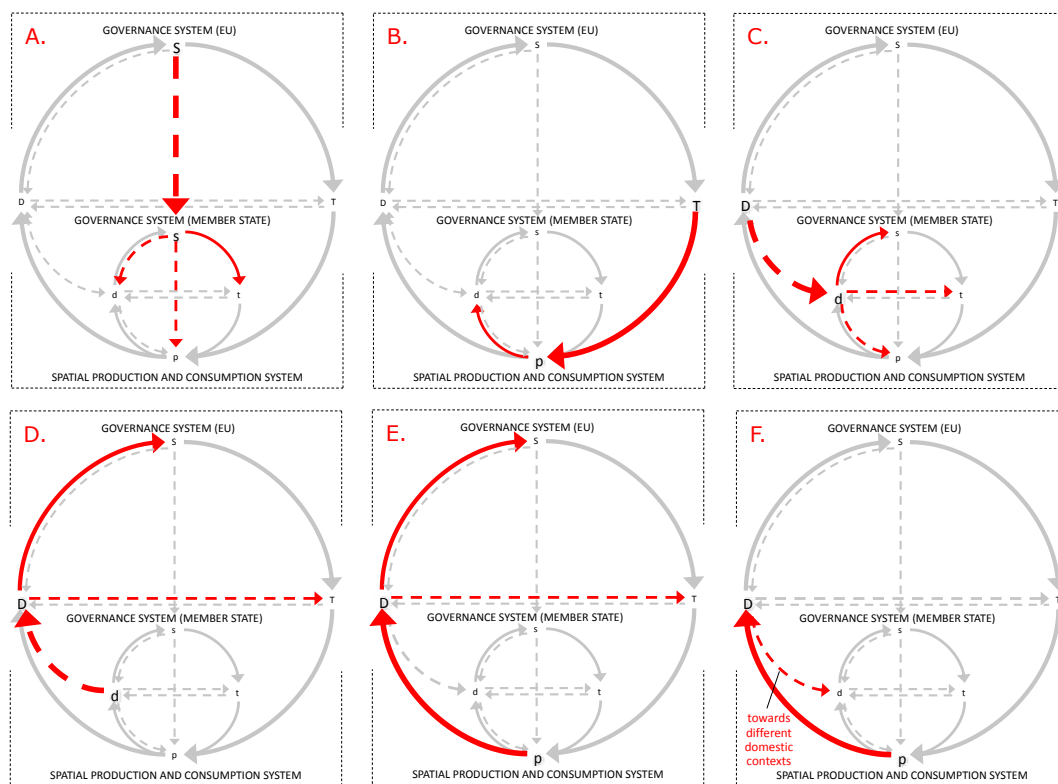
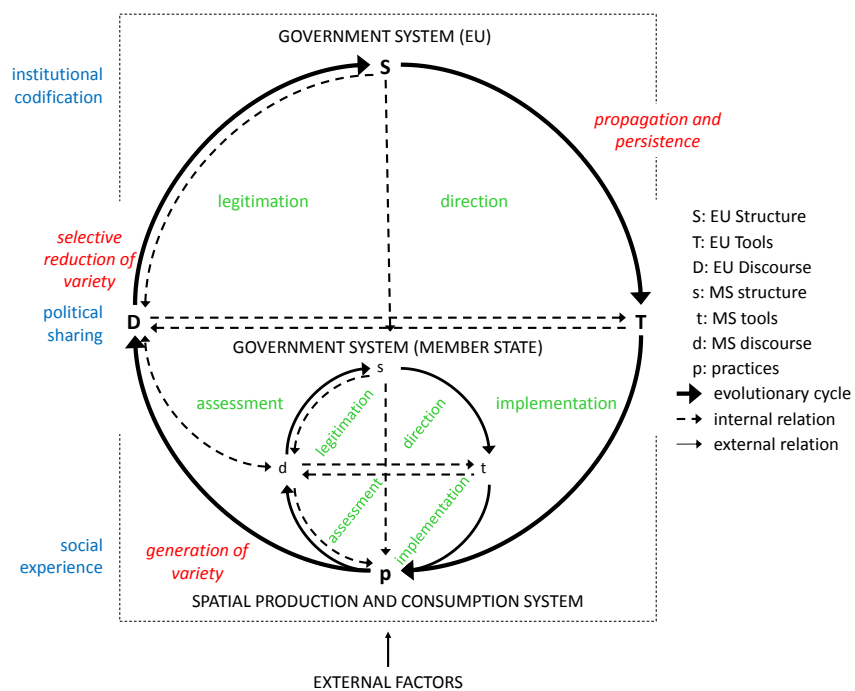
In exploring the domestic impact of EU policies, three mechanisms are usually identified: “First, and in its most ‘explicit’ form, European policy-making may trigger domestic change by prescribing concrete institutional requirements with which Member States must comply ... Second, and somewhat more implicitly, ... European influence is confined to *altering domestic opportunity structures*, and hence the distribution of power and resources between domestic actors ... Third, in its ‘weakest’ form, European policy ... affects domestic arrangements even more indirectly, namely by altering the beliefs and expectations of domestic actors” (Knill and Lehmkuhl 1999:1–2). The proposed analytical tool confirms that these mechanisms also operate in the field of TG&SP as outlined below.

A **structural influence** (“A” in Figure 4.1.1) is delivered from the EU structure (“S”) to each domestic structure (“s”) ($S \rightarrow s$), which then generates secondary influences on domestic tools (“t”) ($s \rightarrow t$), discourse (“d”) ($s \rightarrow d$) and practices (“p”) ($s \rightarrow p$). This structural influence follows the so-called “community method”, i.e. based on the logic that EU treaties allow for the promulgation of EU legislation in established policy fields, to which Member States must adapt through the so-called “transposition” process. Although this is potentially the most coercive mechanism of influence that the EU exerts on Member States, the absence of EU competence in TG&SP makes it effective only for related policy fields (environment, energy, competition, etc.).

An **instrumental influence** (“B”) is channelled from EU tools (“T”) to practices ($T \rightarrow p$) and may trigger a secondary influence on domestic discourse ($p \rightarrow d$). The introduction of recursive policy instruments (e.g. European Structural and Investment Fund (ESIF) programmes) has progressively modified the decision-making of domestic actors on the basis of cost–benefit analyses and stimulated variations in established TG&SP practices. In this regard, the engagement of local actors in complex processes of economic convenience and “social learning” triggered by goals and means shared at the EU level is crucial. Domestic change occurs in accordance with a mixture of economic conditionality mechanisms and interactive socialisation and collective learning.

A **top-down discursive influence** (“C”) is directed from EU discourse (“D”) to each domestic discourse ($D \rightarrow d$), potentially influencing structure ($d \rightarrow s$), tools ($d \rightarrow t$) and practices ($d \rightarrow p$). It is embedded in a circular “discursive integration” process denoting an “example of European integration by networking and policy discourses” that “can be successful when there are strong policy communities active at European and national levels and direct links between them” (Böhme 2002:III). Changes in domestic actors’ preferences are in this case based on cognitive conditionality, and the intensity and quality of change depend on the appropriateness of the EU discourse in terms of legitimacy, collective identity, values and norms (Radaelli 2004).

Figure 4.1.1.
Evolutionary pattern of European territorial governance and six types of Europeanisation influence



Source: Cotella and Janin Rivolin 2015, adapted

iv) “Uploading” influences and the feedback in “horizontal” exchange

The bottom-up dynamics of Europeanisation are addressed to gain an understanding of “the emergence and development at the European level of distinct structures of governance” (Wishlade et al. 2003:6). Whereas the impact of downloading influences can be observed separately in each domestic context, the “upload” of possible drivers of change at the EU level should be understood rather as the result of complex selective processes involving several institutional domains in a generally unstable constellation. Whereas the proposed bi-dimensional framework displays very little of this complexity, it can at least highlight the catalytic role played by EU discourse, in which ultimately the selection takes shape. Two “uploading” influences are distinguishable depending on whether they are triggered by domestic discourse or practices. Moreover, a third influence describes the increasing occurrence of “horizontal” exchange and policy transfer between two or more domestic domains (Lenschow 2006).

A **bottom-up discursive influence** (“D”) converges from each domestic discourse into EU discourse ($d \rightarrow D$) and may then generate secondary influences on EU tools ($D \rightarrow T$) and structure ($D \rightarrow S$). This influence is considered in the context of the “discursive integration” process presented above; however, the attention shifts in this case from the capacity of European “hegemonic concepts” to penetrate domestic contexts, to the process that leads to the definition of those concepts on the basis of competing domestic perspectives, with the European Commission (and in particular the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO)) representing the interests of the EU.

A **practical influence** (“E”) links practices with EU discourse directly ($p \rightarrow D$), potentially generating secondary influences on EU tools ($D \rightarrow T$) and structure ($D \rightarrow S$). As TG&SP practices constitute the “crossroads” between European and domestic rationales in action, they are not only determinant in conveying EU influences to domestic contexts, but also in providing more immediate “knowledge resources” for EU discourse. Admittedly, major problems are in this case related to the objective difficulty of learning through practices in a still weakly institutionalised context.

Finally, as a further opportunity driven by the practical influence, the **horizontal influence** (“F”) describes the fact that, once practices from one context have been shared in EU discourse ($p_1 \rightarrow D$), they can generate a secondary influence on the discourse in one or more other domestic contexts ($D \rightarrow d_n$). This particularly occurs thanks to European Territorial Cooperation initiatives, through which the EU has constituted various platforms of interaction, fostering mutual learning and “horizontal” policy transfer (Dühr et al. 2007).

v) Application and added value: towards a systematic understanding of European territorial governance

The COMPASS project explored systematically the six types of influence described above in relation to the 32 countries of the ESPON space, to understand the mechanisms and impacts of Europeanisation in the field of TG&SP (Figure 4.1.2).

The overall influence of the EU on national TG&SP systems is highly variable by country, by sector and over time. Whereas the impacts of EU legislation – in the fields of environment, energy and competition in particular – are relatively uniform, as a result of their compulsory transposition, the impacts of EU policies are rather differential and closely related to the magnitude of the financial support delivered to each country and policy area. The impacts of EU discourse are even more varied, with countries joining the EU after 2004 and Mediterranean countries appearing to be subjected to the influence of EU concepts and ideas to a larger extent.

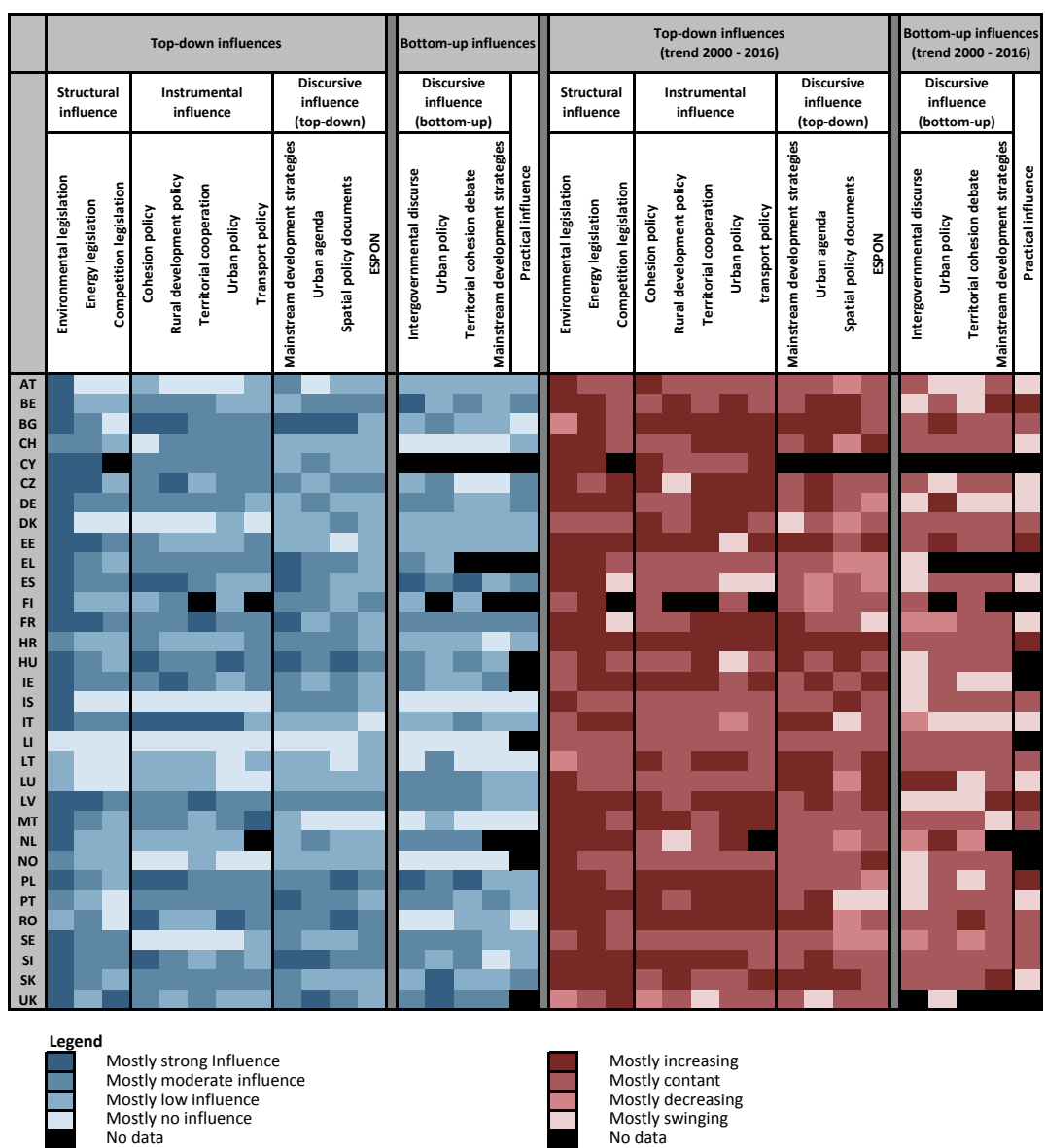
When it comes to bottom-up influences, the impact is less evident. The evidence collected confirms that these mostly occur as a result of competitive processes in which certain national actors are more engaged than others or are more able to find agreement within the main EU discursive arenas (e.g. the Network of Territorial Cohesion Contact Points). On the other hand, despite the progress made in evidence-based surveys, inspiration from specific practices remains sporadic at the EU level, and has only been relevant in a few cases for triggering domestic changes through horizontal episodes of Europeanisation.

The main innovative contribution made by the proposed analytical tool resides in the political awareness it can give rise to. In particular, it can reveal the institutional complexity of European territorial governance as the result of the differential levels of engagement of national TG&SP systems that, as ascertained by the COMPASS project, are extremely varied in nature (Map 4.1.1). Whereas European territorial govern-

ance can be seen as a complex, non-codified institutional process aimed at strengthening the coherence between EU policies and domestic TG&SP, the outcomes of this process are uneven across policy fields and countries, “filtered” as they are through the numerous substantive and procedural differences characterising domestic systems.

Ultimately, the heterogeneity observed suggests that any attempt aimed at improving TG&SP in relation to EU policies (and vice versa) should start from a formal clarification, in institutional terms, of the mutual role of the national TG&SP systems with respect to European territorial governance and EU Cohesion Policy. After all, the shared competence of “economic, social and territorial cohesion” established in the current EU treaties would make it possible.

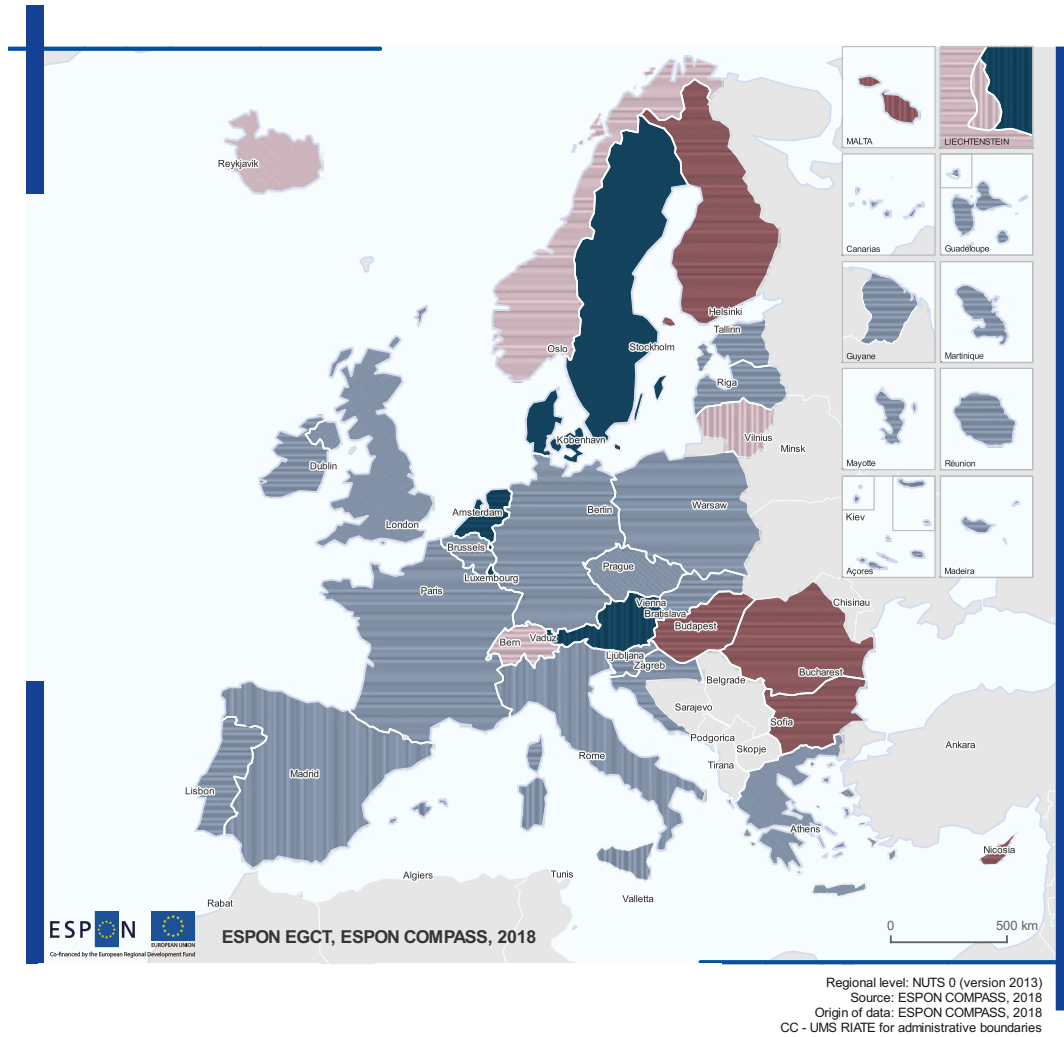
Figure 4.1.2.
Top-down and bottom-up Europeanisation influences between 2000 and 2016, by significance and trend



Source: ESPON and TU Delft 2018

Map 4.1.1.

Typology and trend of perceived engagement in territorial governance and spatial planning systems within European territorial governance



Typology of engagment

- Mostly engaged
- Mostly leading
- Mostly following
- Mostly unengaged

Trend of engagement

- Increasing engagement
- Stable engagement
- Swinging engagement
- Decreasing engagement

Source: ESPON and TU Delft 2018

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4.2. Capabilities and Performance Assessment of City (CAPAcity) dynamic model for potential investment and development

Dimitra Chondrogianni¹⁴, Stylianos Karatzas¹⁵ and Yorgos Stephanedes¹⁶

Key words: decision support method, monitoring capacity, dynamic interactions, data structure, urban development

i) Introduction

Managing urban areas for sustainable capital and territorial redevelopment and cohesion is a top priority for urban and regional policy-makers in Europe. Urban comprehensive carrying capacity (UCCC) is an important conceptual foundation that guides local governments towards sustainable urban development. The methodological issues related to UCCC monitoring and evaluation have been studied in depth, but there is still a need to elaborate on the path to innovative applications, which is of high importance in the emerging framework of smart cities.

A decision-making methodology is proposed that will address this need by managing the data and monitoring the policy impacts and resulting territorial capacities, based on UCCC and a new index, based on the urban smartness (US) of an area. This research argues that in-depth knowledge of the dynamic relationships between city sectors is indispensable for efficiently addressing causes of risk and mainstreaming risk reduction into urban development scenarios. It enables city authorities and actors to improve weak areas and adapt planning, without adversely influencing interconnected risk factors and related impacts and losses.

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