Inhalt – Contents

disP 162 · 3/2005

3 Guest Editorial
More on Creative Governance
Klaus R. Kunzmann and Francesca S. Sartorio

5 Creativity in Planning: a Fuzzy Concept?
Klaus R. Kunzmann

14 Creativity in and for Planning
Louis Albrechts

26 Strategic Spatial Planning
A Historical Review of Approaches, its Recent Revival, and an Overview of the State of the Art in Italy
Francesca S. Sartorio

41 Government or Governance of Urban Innovation?
A Tale of Two Cities
Bruno Dente, Luigi Bobbio and Alessandra Spada

53 Governance Milieus in Shrinking Post-Socialist City Regions – and their Respective Forms of Creativity
Case Miniatures and Conceptual Propositions
Ulf Matthiesen

62 Planning with all your Senses – Learning to Cooperate on a Regional Scale
Ursula Stein

70 Creativity, Culture and Urban Development: Toronto Examined
Simon Miles

88 Aus dem NSL – NSL Info
89 Buchbesprechungen – Book Reviews
100 Eingegangene Literatur – Publications Received
Guest Editorial

More on Creative Governance

Klaus R. Kunzmann and Francesca S. Sartorio

Creativity is not restricted to fine arts or performing arts, to fashion design or fancy architecture. And, it’s beyond Aix-en-Provence, where Mozart’s Cosi fan tutte has been used this summer as an inspiring textbook for creative action on the festival stage. Creativity is entering the discourse of planners and policymakers, who are gridlocked in endless debates between pragmatic, uninspired rational planning, and visionary and normative, though unrealistic, blueprint planning. This issue of disP will contribute to the ongoing debate on the role of creativity in planning.

In November 2004, together with Alessandro Balducci from the Politecnico di Milano, we organised a German-Italian colloquium on “Creativity and Urban Governance in European City-Regions.” It took place in the Villa Vigoni, the Italian-German Center for Cultural Exchange at Lake Como, Italy. This event was a follow-up to an international colloquium on “Creativity, Culture and Urban Development” which took place at the same location in October 2002 and which Klaus R. Kunzmann organized.

A selection of contributions to the colloquium in 2004 was published in DISP 158 (3/2004) prior to the event. These served as background papers to address and stimulate the debate and to foster a mutual learning process among the academics and practitioners from the fields of planning and policy analysis who attended the colloquium.

Eighteen academics and practitioners, from both the allegedly more systematic German milieu and the certainly more imaginative Italian context, presented their thoughts and ideas on the topic and participated in lively discussions with invited international experts for three days. Though we can’t recreate the positive mood and fertile discourse environment of our three days at Villa Vigoni, a wonderful secluded spot on Lake Como, we believe that this second issue of disP devoted to the same theme could give some of the flavor of the discussions and adequately complement the previous contributions and presentations published online at the Politecnico di Milano1 Web site.

On opening day, after a general introduction to the colloquium by Alessandro Balducci, Klaus R. Kunzmann presented some of the many interpretations of creativity and their application in the field of planning. This contribution is part of this issue of disP and provides readers with a conceptual framework to understand the many dimensions of the fuzzy concept of creativity in urban development. The colloquium had three sections: (i) presentations dealing with creative actors; creative planning and creative learning; (ii) presentations referring to the six dimensions of creative governance presented in our previous editorial in DISP 158: rationale and initiators; boundaries; legitimization; envisioning; communication and social learning [Balducci, Kunzmann and Sartorio 2004]; and (iii) presentations on implementation tools and financing. To foster creativity in the intercultural discussion, no definition of creative governance was given beforehand.

Drawing on specific case studies from their own countries for the most part, and referring to contemporary practices in Europe, the contributions at the colloquium were aimed at interpreting “creativity” in the respective policy action context. They covered a wide spectrum of issues and perspectives, from successful city regions trying to maintain their competitive position (as in Turin, Bonn and Milan) to cities confronted with decline (such as the cities along the border between Germany and Poland). In all case studies, creativity was identified as a relevant element for effective governance, understood in terms of having the capability to develop new approaches to planning and local governance (significant policies and projects) and to enhance innovative decision-making processes.

The different nature of the materials notwithstanding, three meta-themes permeated the lively discussion. The first, in terms of recurrence and relevance, is undoubtedly related to the elements and dimensions that foster creativity in governance. The interpretations proposed were varied and articulate; some cases started from an accidental “low point” which unlocked creative “survival” approaches, as in the still declining case of Forst/Lausitz, presented in this issue by Ulf Matthiesen, and in the rather more successful case of Turin, discussed from different angles by Bruno Dente, Luigi Bobbio and Alessandra Spada, while Francesca Sartorio’s
article on strategic planning in Italy offered insights into the many ways creativity can be expressed. Other articles referred to a particular asset in the local arena: the presence of one or more “champions,” as in the Hasselt case study presented by Louis Albrechts; the complexity and density of the arena; or the presence of more or less “steering” actors. A third group of presentations stressed specific endogenous factors or specific issues addressed during the planning processes, for example, in the cases described by Ursula Stein.

The second meta-theme refers to the methodology of analyzing complex governance cases as a way to define effectiveness in fostering innovative milieus and creativity-led planning processes. Some of the articles presented in this issue of disP report on the efforts needed to precisely define, concepts that otherwise are too volatile both in their meaning and interpretations as well as in their “use” in research and professional practice. Particularly relevant on this point, though they are referring to very different, in a way almost opposite situations, are the contributions by Matthiesen and Dente, Bobbio and Spada. Reading between the lines of their contributions one finds a plea for more tailor-made local research in the effort to adapt to situations that are too complex and too differentiated to be encapsulated in a static set of variables. The German case study by Ulf Matthiesen opens the way to a methodological “third way” by developing the concept of governance milieus in shrinking cities. The two relatively successful Italian case studies presented by Dente, Bobbio and Spada identify two crucial factors for the understanding of innovative local governance forms: complexity, understood as the diversity (in terms not only of the nature of the action but also the level) of actors acting in the local arena, and density, understood as the tightness of local networks in local governance arenas.

Finally, the need for defining new professional toolboxes for planners was the third meta-theme cutting across many of the contributions. The article by Louis Albrechts focuses specifically on the new mind-set planners have to develop, a mind-set that is more concentrated on discontinuity and prospective thinking than on envisioning the future “as an extended present.” Similar thoughts were developed by Ursula Stein when she described her professional experience in mediating city-regional planning processes as an appeal to use all five senses, beauty and emotions along the long path to successful collective learning. The article by Simon Miles, “Creativity, Culture and Urban Development: Toronto Examined,” which was presented at the first colloquium in 2002 was added to this issue because it brings another interesting perspective to the debate.

The colloquium last year in the Villa Vigoni was a magnificent event of intercultural learning, which, as usual, raised more questions than it could give answers. However, more creative action has clearly been suggested as a precondition for coping with the manifold challenges of urban development in European cities and city-regions, especially under conditions of growing social and economic disparity. Following John Dewey’s concept of “creative democracy,” such creative action (Kreatives Handeln) has been identified by Hans Joas as a third model to rationalize a normative action. No doubt, more thoughts have to be directed towards that end to avoid having creative planning remain just another fuzzy concept in urban and regional development discourses.

References


Notes

1 http://www.diap.polimi.it/presestazione/seminari_convegni/convegni/villavigoni.html
Creativity in Planning: a Fuzzy Concept?

Klaus R. Kunzmann

Abstract: In recent years, all around the world, Europe, America, Asia, creativity has become a buzz word in urban and regional policy. Cities and regions have to be “creative” (Landry 2000) in order to cope with the challenges of technological and structural change, to be competitive or to qualify as locations for the new creative class (Florida 2000). Creative industries are considered the engine for future economic development and the salvation for run-down inner city quarters, brownfields or first-generation suburbs. Business consultants earn their fees by stressing creativity as the most essential condition for the success of innovative businesses. Hence, it is not surprising that “creativity” has become a much used term in urban and regional policies. The following essay presents findings on creativity without the ambition to bring clarity into a concept, which is open for further interpretation. It is rather an invitation to creative thinking and action in planning.

In fact, the importance of creativity for urban and regional development is not a new invention, it is rather a rediscovery. Twenty years ago, in 1985, Ake Andersson published a full account of creativity and city development using Stockholm as a case study, but this did not reach the international readership because it was written in Swedish (Andersson 1990). Only a brief summary of this inspiring book was published internationally (Andersson 1987). At around the same time, the GREMI group launched the concept of creative milieus, which they defined as “…the set, or the complex network of mainly informal social relationships in a limited geographical area, often determining a specific external image and a specific internal representation and a sense of belonging, which enhance the local innovative capability through synergetic and collective learning processes.” (Wikipedia, quoted from Fromhold-Eisebith 1999). Others have referred to Andersson’s ideas in the meantime (Kunzmann 1990; Hall 1994).

Creativity has since been used in a number of book titles from an array of academic arenas. Creative Europe is a cross-cultural account of governance and management of artistic creativity in Europe (Cliche et al. 2002) and Städtische Kreativität (Urban Creativity) sees creativity as a potential for the regeneration of East German cities (Liebmann and Robischon 2003). And, Musterd and Ostendorf (2004) have titled their recent collection of articles: Creative Cultural Knowledge Cities. Creative governance is another concept suggested to help overcome gridlocked decision-making in city-regions (Kunzmann 2004).

How is Creativity Defined?

Given its attractiveness to the broad community of scholars, it is not surprising that there have been many attempts to define creativity.

- Starting with the basics, the Oxford Dictionary defines creativity as “the ability to produce
new and original ideas and things.” This sounds reasonable. However, it does not really help a planner struggling with legal regulations and financial rules, as well as political and community sensitivities and considerations in his or her day-to-day work. Whenever he creates new plans or develops new approaches to solve certain problems, he is soon reminded not to forget about the feasibility of the original idea.

• One can define creativity as the “mental phenomena, skills and/or tools capable of originating (and subsequently developing) innovation, inspiration or insight. Pop psychology generally may associate it with right or forehead brain activity or even specifically with lateral thinking.” (Wikipedia 22.07.2005)

• Collins Dictionary of Sociology [Jary and Jary 2000: 119] presents creativity as “that aspect of intelligence characterized by originality in thinking and problem solving. Creative ability involves the use of divergent thinking, with thoughts towards solutions in a number of directions.” Tests of creativity typically require the generation of as many appropriate responses as possible.

• Csikszentmihalyi’s (1996) definition of creativity is more useful to us: “Creativity is any act, idea, or product that changes an existing domain, or that transforms an existing domain into a new one.” And, his definition of a creative person is “someone whose thoughts or actions change a domain, or establish a domain. It is important to remember, however, that a domain cannot be changed without the explicit or implicit consent of a field responsible for it.”

• Another definition comes from the US creativity guru Edward de Bono (de Bono 1992: 2): “Creativity is a messy and confusing subject and seems to range from devising a new toothpaste cap to Beethoven’s writing his Fifth Symphony. Much of the difficulty arises directly from the words ‘creative’ and ‘creativity’.

At the simplest level ‘creative’ means bringing into being something that was not there before. In a sense, ‘creating a mess’ is an example of creativity. The mess was not here before and has been brought into being. Then we ascribe some value to the result, so the ‘new’ thing must have a value. At this point, we can begin to have artistic creativity because what the artist produces is new and has value. We now have the notion that creative output should not be ‘obvious’ or ‘easy’. There has to be something unique or rare about it. Exceptional craftsmanship would fit here.”

From a planner’s perspective, one could add to this definition that a creative planner also has to be an urban or regional guerrilla in order to undermine established bureaucratic and political agendas.

To close his seminal work on creativity La Fantasia e la Concrettezza, the Italian sociologist Domenico de Masi outlined twelve dimensions of creativity (de Masi 2003: 688–691):

(1) La creatività è punto d’arrivo – Creativity is the goal; (2) La creatività è donatrice di senso – Creativity gives meaning; (3) La creatività è donatrice di vita – Creativity gives life; (4) La creatività è sorprendente – Creativity is a duty; (5) La creatività è doverosa – Creativity is a duty; (6) La creatività è doppia per universally – Creativity is doubly universal; (7) La creatività è donatrice di pace – Creativity brings peace; (8) La creatività è donatrice di forza – Creativity gives strength; (9) La creatività è rivelle – Creativity is rebellious; (10) La creatività è misteriosa – Creativity is mysterious; (11) La creatività è gioiosa – Creativity is joyful; (12) La creatività è impertinente e soave – Creativity is impertinent and gentle.

In his toolkit for urban innovators, Charles Landry (2000: 133) turns directly from creativity to space: “A creative milieu is a place – either a cluster of buildings, a part of a city, a city as a whole or a region – that contains the necessary preconditions in terms of ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ infrastructure to generate a flow of ideas and inventions. Such a milieu is a physical setting where a critical mass of entrepreneurs, intellectuals, social activists, artists, administrators, power brokers or students can operate in an open-minded, cosmopolitan context and where face-to-face interaction creates new ideas, artefacts, products, services and institutions and, as a consequence, contributes to economic success.”

Linking creativity to people and cities, or rather to selected classes in particular cities, Richard Florida (2002) offers the following definitions:

“The economic need for creativity has registered itself in the rise of a new class, which I call the Creative Class. Some 38 million Americans, 30 percent of all employed people, belong to this class. I define the core of the Creative Class to include people in science and engineering, architecture and design, education, arts, music and entertainment, whose economic function is to create new ideas, new technology and/or new creative content. Around the core, the Creative Class also includes a broader group of creative professionals in business and finance, law, health care and related fields. These people engage in complex problem solving that in-
volves a great deal of independent judgement and requires high levels of education or human capital. In addition, all members of the Creative Class – whether they are artists or engineers, musicians or computer scientists, writers or entrepreneurs – share a common creative ethos that values creativity, individuality, difference and merit. For the members of the Creative Class, every aspect and every manifestation of creativity – technological, cultural and economic – is interlinked and inseparable.” (p. 8)

“The Creative Class is moving away from traditional corporate communities, Working Class centers and even many Sunbelt regions to a set of places I call Creative Centers.” (p. 218)

This concept of a creative class, which has been so appealing to the media, as well as to urban managers and architects, has provoked much academic debate. However, there are some shortcomings in his argument: creativity is not just a domain of the educated class, and not every architect or banker is creative.

Despite all these efforts at definition, creativity remains a fuzzy concept. To sum up: creativity is certainly originality and mental, cognitive flexibility based on multi-dimensional thinking. It requires fantasy and visionary power. Creativity is the willingness and courage to experiment and to take risks, hence to explore ways and means to find solutions for problems and to address challenges. Most importantly, for planners, it is the capability to manage projects, procedures or approaches beyond a day-to-day routine and to make well-balanced decisions, even if these are based on incomplete information. Creativity in planning and city development has many dimensions. The fact that creativity has a positive meaning in society helps promote creative action. Some of these dimensions will be explored in this article.

**Creativity Sells**

Creativity is a buzz word in the media and advertising industry today. Popular business journals and marketing brochures are full of references to creativity. When a global corporation like Canon markets creativity as its key competence, they want to convince the reader that the corporation is investing much time and money in innovative, leading-edge technologies and products. Investment in creativity pays off.

**The World’s Most Creative cities?**

When Newsweek published a feature about the “World’s Most Creative Cities” in 2002, it presented an odd selection. Under the subtitle “The New Centres of Culture and Vitality”, it argued that cities such as Newcastle/Gateshead in Britain, Kabul in Afghanistan, Austin/Texas in the USA, Tijuana in Mexico, Cape Town in South Africa, Antwerp in Belgium, Marseille in France and Zhong Guan Cun in China are as creative as New York, Paris or London, the traditional models of creative cities. Referring to the well-known legends of Paris in the 1890s, Greenwich Village in the early 1900s and a less legendary Seattle in the 1990s, the journalists asked the rhetorical question: “How to build a creative city?” The creative ferment of these cities, which the contributors explored, is quite diverse. Is it mainly music, fashion, dance, design, fine art or just visions and a strong take-off spirit that attract the media and film producers? However, it is clearly more than that; it is rather the spirit moving a city at a certain time slot and it has much to do with new images of spaces.

In Newcastle-upon-Tyne, a giant angel sculpted by Anthony Gormely, triggered off an array of public and private initiatives that in the end made Newcastle second only to Liverpool in the fierce competition for Britain’s Capital of Europe in 2008. On the banks of the River Tyne in Gateshead, the 1950’s grain warehouses of the former Baltic Flour Mills was transformed by Dominic Williams into Britain’s new Centre of Contemporary Art, and the Gateshead Mili-

![Figure 4: Canon advertisement “Our Strategy”.](Reprinted by courtesy of Canon Europe)
lennium Bridge, designed by Wilkinson Eyre Architects, were attractive bites for the real estate sector to invest in a run-down urban district on both sides of the Tyne, a dark industrial river that nobody considered an asset. One could argue whether the site is still creative today, after all, Gateshead’s transformation is coming to an end. However, it has given Newcastle a new image and contributed to its fame as “party city”. No wonder that the city has become the place to go for students, and, what is even more important, a place to stay after the degrees have been earned.

A new spirit came to the port and diamond city of Antwerp with the so-called “Antwerp Six,” a group of graduates from the Royal Academy of Fine Arts who revolutionized fashion. Their success – today Antwerp is a highly esteemed cradle of fashion in Europe – has encouraged filmmakers, graphic designers, and photographers to settle in the city. The title “Cultural City of Europe 1992” was certainly helpful in turning the declining port city into a European centre of creativity, a status the city once held in the 16th century.

The story of Zhong Guan Cun is different. This urban district in northwest Beijing is a very special case. It is a technology hub that has been dubbed China’s Silicon Valley. It has hundreds of small and medium-sized firms in the high-tech sector that employ the highly qualified graduates of the adjacent universities, which are among the best in China. Originally, the area was developed by grass-roots forces. Now the district, essential for the capital city’s local economy, has a lot of support from the central government.

The other cities tell similar stories: Marseille managed to get rid of its bad image with rap music-related developments and developer-led inner city gentrification. In Tijuana, musicians, artists and filmmakers from Mexico and the US benefited from the creative cultural milieu of the border city. Music industries made Austin an attractive place to live and to work. Finally, Kabul is described in the Newsweek story as a city that, both economically and culturally, started from scratch after ideological suppression and a long war. There is the hope for a better future, which nourishes a new local creativity.

One could argue that the selection was the result of a call for timely contributions on a fashionable theme in a time of shortage of political events, and that the journalists who contributed were fascinated by these particular cities. Certainly, such success stories have much to do with individual personalities, city managers or local cultural celebrities who support new things to flourish or who promote and support developments which then attract risk-taking real estate

Figure 5: Artist’s studio at the University of Arts in Xiah.
(Photograph: Klaus R. Kunzmann)
developers. Why was Helsinki not mentioned, or Bilbao, Vienna, or Genoa? Whatever the reasons were, the selected cities still tell interesting stories about local creativity. One could repeat the summer survey of 2002 every year, and most probably the outcome would be different each time. However, it would encourage mayors and city managers all over the globe to allow things to happen in their cities that are beyond mainstream urban marketing routines.

Most real or “branded” creative cities in the world are pockets of cities that are experiencing transition from one state to another. Paris has a lot of both affluent and marginal urban districts where creativity is absent. Usually, once the creative city-in-a-city is gentrified, the creative caravan has moved on, or the mainstream fashion has changed, it means the creative class is about to explore another urban district where space for creative action is available and rents are lower.

Monte Verità: an Unusually Creative Space

When visiting Ascona in southern Switzerland, one would not expect that this small tourist city on Lake Maggiore had seen a community of Dutch, German and British creative thinkers, anarchists and innovators in the early years of the 20th century. They were attracted by the paradise-like landscape and over the years on the hill outside the city overlooking the lake, they lived in a kind of creative gated community where the rules of life were different. Here they explored new lifestyles and discussed how to change society – if not the world.

The roots of many lifestyles can be found in Monte Verità. Early vegetarians lived there and promoted healthy food, long before it became popular in California. Political thinkers, such as Erich Mühsam, were inspired by the location and the debates they had with its creative residents. Expressionists (Alexander von Jawlensky), Dadaists (Hugo Ball) and Bauhaus architects and painters (Gropius, Schlemmer, Moholy-Nagy) were here searching for inspiration. For a few decades, the liberal oasis was one of the most creative laboratories of ideas in Europe, until World War II when it became the residence of the German Baron Eduard von der Heydt.

In 1945, Monte Verità was the historical site of the peace settlement between the USA and the German army in Italy. After the war, the compound changed ownership again and became a centre of higher education run by ETH Zurich. Today, creative researchers come to the center and benefit from the genius loci and from the particular magnetic radiation under the hill, which has been identified by rational geologists. Some believe that it is this radiation that has made the place so unusually creative.

Such creative life spaces can be identified in various regions of the world at various times. They all have in common that non-conformist individuals attracted communities that were in search of alternatives to mainstream thinking. Obviously, such life spaces cannot be planned, they evolve as matter of circumstance.

Creativity and Urban Planning

The above stories about creative cities, though the selection was rather random, do not seem to be related to any form of urban planning. Rather the opposite: It seems that creativity in cities...
has not much to do with planning in the traditional form of zoning or urban design. Creativity in city development seems to evolve where urban planning is absent, where non-conformists, creative squatters and micro-developers are given freedom to do whatever they wish to do in terms of space. Furthermore, planning in cities is absent where the property market is distorted, where landowners are not willing to sell, where brownfields are too vast and too expensive to be redeveloped, where urban districts are neglected, where local decision-making processes are grid-locked for whatever reason.

In Europe, the complexity of multi-tier governments with their respective regulatory frameworks does not leave much space for creative urban and regional planning in city-regions. The usual complaint of developers, investors and lobbyists is that urban and regional planning is very much dominated by a comprehensive legal framework. This may have some truth. However, in day-to-day practice, planning is rather hampered by corporate rituals and institutional jealousies, by the NIMBY attitudes of local communities, or the vested interests of landowners as well as by politicians, who, before or after elections, wish to retain their power. Usually, there is little space for innovative, creative thinking, for flexibility, for creative action in city-region development, unless creative actors are brought into the process of planning and decision-making. Usually the “Why we shouldn’t” community is strong and difficult to beat, while the “How-to-do”, or “Let’s try” community is rather small and without much argumentative power. Creative planning needs creative people, creative planners, opinion leaders, moderators and communicators who know enough about the past to envision the future, and a planning culture that gets out of grid-locked bureaucratic statutory planning and political bargaining. Here’s a list of the essentials:

- Political and community leaders who encourage their advisors to develop new visions and alternative solutions, who allow for innovative experiments and take the risk of failure.
- Imaginative planners and actors within the public sector and in political decision-making circles, in civil society and around the many round and hexagonal tables that have replaced the meeting-rooms of technocratic bureaucrats and the backrooms of local political parties.
- Risk-taking personalities in political parties, unions, utility corporations and housing asso-
ciations who dare to think differently, who invest time and risk money to search for new solutions to routine procedures and actions.

- Creative bankers and finance officers, who, on the basis of their expert knowledge, are willing to leave the routine tracks of financing and explore new corridors to make things happen.
- Open-minded developers who risk developing innovative experimental projects beyond mainstream development fashions.
- Researchers in independent regional think tanks, who provide the background information and creative visions for decision-making processes.
- Talented moderators who know how to motivate conflicting parties to search for joint visions.
- Forward-looking educators in planning schools who teach future planners how to creatively use their knowledge for problem solving, rather than in mechanically complying with conventional rules and regulations.
- Citizens and young innovative entrepreneurs who are committed to the community and glimpse beyond their own backyards and their own interests.
- Immigrants, who are empowered and encouraged to participate in local and regional development and bring in new views and perspectives.
- Artists who stimulate the regional environment with their images and actions, their music, performances and creations.
- Journalists at regional and local levels, from both traditional and underground media, who monitor and accompany local and regional planning processes, not just as critical watchdogs or court reporters, but as multipliers, who provide appropriate background information, refer to best practices elsewhere and support creative action as a means to strengthen local identity.

In addition, creative planning needs carefully selected catalytic processes and projects to demonstrate how new approaches to city development could lead to better solutions. These are projects that require the cooperation of regional actors and combining new procedural elements. The character of such projects depends very much on local conditions. What is important, however, is that such projects have a high potential for success and are easy to communicate and replicate.

Finally, creative planning requires milieus where the above stakeholders of planning and decision-making processes can get inspiration for their visions and where they can meet appropriate partners for sharing and implementing their visions. Without creative partnerships, visions remain blueprints stored in a drawer or thrown into the garbage bin of disappointment.

Creativity in planning is a long-term project. It requires both “civil obedience” and active patience to build up networks of creative actors who combine their visions for a sustainable future for a city or a region.

Afterword

The person who beheaded the statue of Vitruvius in the Pincio Gardens of Rome above Piazza del Popolo, was not very creative, unless it was in hiding his (certainly not her) disgraceful deed. It may well be that the head of this eminent Roman architect and urban planner decorates a designer’s or city builder’s studio somewhere between Palermo, Nagoya and Boston. Hopefully, it inspires the illegal “owner” to be creative when promoting urban development. In the Pincio Gardens, however, for the time being Vitruvius remains headless, while many other statues wink at the strollers, who walk these grounds seeking relaxation from their usually not-so-creative daily burdens, thereby joining such diverse past visitors as Mahatma Gandhi, Mussolini, Richard Strauss and King Farouk of Egypt.

Bibliography


Landry, Charles; Binchini, Franco; Ebert, Ralf; Gnad, Fritz; Kunzmann, Klaus R. (1996): The creative city in Britain and Germany. Study for the Anglo-German Foundation for the Study of Industrial Society. London.


Creativity in and for Planning

Louis Albrechts

Abstract: This paper argues that society as a whole and planning in particular need more creative responses to the problems and challenges they face. Planning needs creativity to imagine and to construct (structurally) different futures. First, this paper briefly analyses the case of Hasselt, Belgium as an example of creative transport planning and creative local governance. Then the paper questions the kind of planning that creativity needs and looks for a systematic method. Scenario building turns out to be an excellent tool for conceiving possible futures, how to get from here to there, what has to be changed first, and what next, etc. Just as there are many traditions and collective practices, there are also many images of what a society wants to achieve. As the opportunities for implementing images are not equal, the paper reflects on a planning annex governance system that serves all citizens and especially the least powerful. All this has an impact on planners as well. In the final part, the paper touches briefly on some of the conditions needed for creativity, how to enhance creativity and how realistic the discourse is.

Introduction

The change of social, economic, cultural and political contexts, the pace of change, but also the challenges of bureaucracy, inflexibility, and lack of innovativeness inherent in traditional planning have brought out the need for spatial planning systems and practices to “renew” themselves. Most spatial planning is sparked by recognizing that a place faces a problem, is otherwise inadequate or when challenges arise that need to be addressed. Without this, hardly any political will or sense of urgency can be generated to drive change. Experience shows that it is much more difficult to generate or sustain change in successful situations where everything is seen to be satisfactory, which is why business has developed concepts such as total quality management, centered on the notion of continuous improvement as a means of generating challenges internally (see Landry 2000). Governments and civil society could learn from this concept and adapt it to their needs. Indeed, if we keep emphasizing the planning enterprise as a purely regulatory and problem-solving practice, it may lose its creative possibilities for structural change. I use the term “structural change” to describe those innovative changes that contribute to more sustainable, qualitative, just and open places.

The purpose of this paper is to reflect on creativity in and for planning. What kind of creativity does planning need and what kind of planning does creativity need? As governance and planning are necessarily interlinked in society, what kind of governance culture is needed to support creativity? How can planning become more innovative and more creative in its dealing with places? I focus mainly on four questions: First, what kind of planning embeds the challenges of creativity and innovation in its approach? Second, what “techniques” enable structural change in terms of creating possible and desirable futures? Third, what type of governance has the capacity to strengthen creativity? Fourth, what does this mean for planners in terms of attitudes and skills?

I start my reasoning not with an abstract idea of planning and governance but with the concrete activities of citizens, politicians and planners. For this purpose, I draw on one case to illustrate how creativity was applied. The case provides a leg up to a more continuous, creative, proactive, enabling, flexible and open planning, and to a governance culture that provides focus, anticipates problems, sets new targets and generates its own challenges. Finally, I argue that this vision of planning and governance is not just a utopian dream.

Creativity in Practice

Before embarking on a search for creativity in practice, we have to know what we are looking for. Although there are numerous definitions of “creativity”, for most of us it seems difficult to grasp its essence. In the context of this paper, I define “creativity” as an individual, or here preferably social, process that stimulates the ability to view problems, situations and challenges in new and different ways and to invent and develop original, imaginative futures as a reaction to these problems, situations and challenges. Ability focuses more on “how” to think instead of “what” to think (see Michalko 2001: 13).
In the case of Hasselt, Belgium, I briefly focus on the development of creative transport planning, ditto local governance and the role of a key person—a champion in the terminology of Bryson—which allow for structural change.

**Creative Planning and Governance in Tackling a Transport Problem**

Hasselt, a regional city in the northeast of Belgium, is a major commercial and service centre with a population of 69,000 inhabitants. Like many cities, it suffered from mounting costs of externalities caused by automobile travel: accidents, traffic jams and environmental problems. These externalities had a negative impact on the liveability and the appeal of the city. Combined with other factors, it resulted in a decreasing number of inhabitants. In the mid-1990s, the new local government (a coalition of socialists, Greens and conservatives) with a charismatic new mayor was placed in a dilemma: choosing a third ring road or completely reversing the current transportation policy. The socialist party organized meetings with local residents. In these meetings, local traffic proved to be an important issue. In the meantime, a temporary free shuttle bus service was introduced to compensate citizens for the nuisance caused by major local road works. This shuttle proved to be an enormous success.

Although the intense discussions of the 1970s (see Bologna) about free public transport were on the decline and even seemed to disappear, the mayor launched the pioneering idea to introduce free public transport for citizens and visitors (a broader relational perspective than just the internal travel patterns of its own citizens) for the entire urban area. This was just one action from a much larger strategy of 22 actions to be carried out in close cooperation with residents, companies, schools, public bodies, etc. The reasoning behind the idea of free public transport was that a considerable shift from cars to public transport would make the construction of the third ring road unnecessary and even the first ring road could be built back.

When, in discussions with the public transport company, the mayor found out that only 9% of the overall cost of public transport was covered by the sale of tickets, he immediately offered to compensate the bus company for this loss. The cost for the city was approximately 1% of its annual budget or 15 euro per inhabitant per year. The savings resulting from not constructing the third ring road more than offset the subsidies for transit services, thus leading to a positive net financial effect. The radical reconstruction of the first ring road narrowed car lines but improved facilities for pedestrians (a nine-meter-wide pedestrian area bordered by a double row of trees) and cyclists and added considerably to the liveability and the overall quality of the urban environment.

The results between mid-1997, when the scheme was introduced, and 2002 were mixed:
On the one hand, an astonishing increase of 1,200% of the number of public transport passengers and an increase of the number of bus routes from 1 to 9; but on the other hand, the number of cyclists decreased. But the most important results are the strengthening of the social tissue, the fact that the elderly became more mobile, that the discourse on public transport turned very positive and that the extreme right wing party did not gain a foothold in the city council – this in sharp contrast with other similar cities.

In this case a problem, a major road works, was turned into an asset – that is, a free shuttle bus. The problem of congestion was viewed from different perspectives. Indeed, instead of the traditional engineering logic “more traffic = more roads”, the logics of the pedestrians, the elderly, public transport and the overall liveability of the city were introduced. The mayor thought of a solution – free public transport that no one else was thinking about. Costs (i.e., constructing a third ring road) were turned into net benefits, despite the subsidies paid to the transport company. The liveability of the city was enhanced by linking it to the traffic problem. It enhanced social capital and political capital as citizens and local politicians took pride in “their” city as it became a best practice case attracting visitors, governments, students, all kinds of specialists in transport, etc., from all over the world.

The case also illustrates the impact of a leading person. Although the context was not very innovative (a traditional socialist party and a just as traditional engineer-led public works department), the mayor managed to make people think about new ideas and new solutions. The project resulted in a landslide election victory for the mayor and his party.

**Back to the Future**

A positivist view of planning assumes that the one best future follows automatically if the analytical and forecasting techniques are applied well. The same reasoning made modernist planners believe that the future can be predicted and controlled (see Ogilvy 2002). Today, the problems and challenges confronted by places cannot be tackled and managed adequately with this old intellectual apparatus and mind-set. Consequently, we have to reflect creatively and innovatively on the concepts and techniques we use and on the logic we apply in tackling these problems and challenges. We have to think afresh and, as it were, reinvent our places to secure a better future and to improve their quality. Therefore, planning needs creativity to imagine (structurally) different futures, in order to bear on political decisions and their implementation. This implies that creativity is not limited to a particular stage of the planning process.
Reverse Thinking

The kind of creativity I have in mind is a creativity that simply refuses to accept that the current way is necessarily the best way and breaks free from concepts, structures and ideas that are only there through the process of continuity. It is precisely discontinuity which forces us outside the usual boundaries of “reasonableness” (see de Bono 1992). Discontinuity is at odds with a concept of the future as an extended present (an exploratory approach based on an abstract notion of time).

In our view, the future must represent situations which are not merely temporal extensions of the here and now. To will a particular future state is an act of choice involving valuation, judgment and the making of decisions that relate to mankind-determined ends and to the selection of the most appropriate means for coping with such ends – as was done in the Hasselt case. This is contrary to a future as an extension of the here and now. We are not bound by our past to live out a future that is predetermined and therefore predictable. Nor is it so open that anything is possible, that we can achieve anything we want to achieve (Ozbekhan 1969; Ogilvy 2002). Conditions and constraints on “what is” and “what is not” possible are placed by the past and the present. These conditions and constraints have to be questioned and challenged in the process, given the specific context of a place. So, in order to imagine the conditions and constraints for the future differently, we need to deal with history and to overcome history. Therefore, we also need the exploratory approach, based on an abstract notion of time.

In the exploratory approach, an observer point of view is taken. The interrelation between the normative and the exploratory approach (so-called prospective thinking, see Ozbekhan 1969) defines the boundaries of a fairly large space between openness and fixity. The normative approach invents and creates futures – in relation to the context and to the social and cultural values to which a particular place is historically committed – as something new rather than a solution arrived at as a result of existing trends. It is only by working backwards, “reverse” thinking, that we are able to open up and use other tracks. If a place develops a vision of where it wants to be and then looks back, the barriers appear.

The challenge is to find a systematic method that provides a critical interpretation of existing reality, thinks creatively about possible futures and how to get there. Indeed, it is one thing to know where you want a place to go; it’s another thing to get the actors to move in that direction. Scenario building turns out to be an excellent tool for conceiving possible futures, how to get from here to there, what has to be changed first, and what next, etc.
**Scenario Building**

Scenario building has enjoyed a rich history over the past fifty years. The technique was developed by H. Kahn in the 1950s. Further pioneering work has been performed by Royal Dutch/Shell during the 1970s and thereafter (Ted Newland, Pierre Wack, Arie de Geus, Kees van der Heijden) and SRI International (the former Stanford Research Institute). A scenario can be defined as a narrative description of a possible state of affairs or development over time of a place. Two major categories of scenarios can be identified: an exploratory scenario starting from past and present trends and leading to likely futures; and second, a normative scenario built on the basis of a desired future. As a narrative, scenarios connect very well with a tradition of stories in planning (see Forester 1989; Mandelbaum 1991; Throgmorton 1996; Sanderson 1998, 2003) and the combination of exploratory and normative scenarios fits very well with the intellectual traditions of our view of the future.

Scenario building derives from the observation that, given the impossibility of knowing precisely how the future will play out, a good decision or strategy to adopt is one that plays out well across several possible futures. To find that “robust” strategy, scenarios are, essentially, specially constructed stories about the future, each one modelling a distinct, plausible place in which we might someday have to want to live and work. It is about making forces that push the future in different directions visible, so that if they do happen, the planner/politician/civil society will at least recognize them and may be better prepared to respond. It’s about making better decisions today for the future. The technique seems particularly suited for visioning as it creates integrated images that articulate the shared hopes and aspirations of places—a geography of the unknown, see Albrechts 2005; stimulates sectors, organizations, groups who might be networked and collaborated to network with others and find out how their joint future(s) might look; and describes a transition from the present to a future state.

The agenda setting (see Bryson and Crosby 1992; Albrechts 2005; Albrechts and Van den Broeck 2004) for and the creation of visions must be looked upon as contextual, conscious and purposive actions to represent values and meanings for the future. Hence the need to shift from analysis, which seeks to discover a place that might exist, towards design that creates a place that would not otherwise be. This is somehow in line with Habermas’ knowing (understanding challenges and options available) and steering (capacity to take action to deal with challenges) (Habermas 1996). The steps required to deliver and to implement the wished-for spatial outcome vary according to the underlying structure. The visions are based on context, values, current drivers and trends. Scenarios augment understanding by helping to see what possible futures might look like. Scenarios help in thinking about how places/institutions will operate under a variety of future possibilities and enable decision-makers/civil society to detect and explore all, or as many as possible, alternative futures so as to clarify present actions and subsequent consequences. For Schwartz (1991: 192), this is “rehearsing the future”.

Moreover, scenarios are a way of understanding the dynamics at work shaping the future and are an attempt to identify the primary “driving forces” [social, economic, technological, cultural, political] at work in the present. Scenarios identify contingent decisions by exploring what places/institutions might do if certain circumstances arise and reflect on a series of “what if” stories. Some of the driving forces are fixed in the sense that they are completely outside our control and will play out in any narrative about the future. Therefore the “possible futures” must be placed within a specific context (economic, social, cultural, political, and power), place, time and scale regarding specific issues that are of interest and within a particular combination of actors. The context provides the setting for the process but also takes form and undergoes change in the process.

With visioning, we have to focus on “what ought to be”. Without normative scenarios, we risk adopting a pernicious relativism where anything goes (see Ogilvy 2002). At the end, we have to come back to what “is” in order to present ideas and concepts that are solid, workable and of testable value. To avoid naïve utopian thinking, all this must be rooted in an understanding of the basic processes that shape places. This must be done recognizing conditions of power, inequality and diversity. Whose vision is created remains a basic question to be asked.

**Values and Judgments**

The future must symbolize some good, quality, or virtue that the present lacks. Speaking of quality, virtues and values is a way of describing the sort of place we want to live in, or think we should live in. The futures result from judgment and choices formed with reference to the idea...
of desirability and betterment. A central concept of our age, sustainability, provides a new lens/ focus through which we can provide substance to desirability and betterment. It is a rich concept that needs to be stretched beyond environmentalism to reconfigure conceptions of the economy, society, cultures, politics and spaces. Our concept of sustainability cannot be imagined without an acknowledgment of a politics of difference (introduction of different logics in Hasselt) and spatial quality. This implies a clear statement against any notion of a purely quantitative growth approach (see Hamilton 2004) and, in contrast, the need for a “just” use of resources and social cohabitation. If we look at plans today, most, not to say all, embrace some unspecified notion of sustainability but almost none questions “growth” as such.

The values and images of what a society wants to achieve must be discussed in the planning process (value rationality). Values and images are not generated in isolation but are socially constructed, given meaning and validated by traditions of belief and practice; they are reviewed, reconstructed and invented through collective experience (see Ozbekhan 1969, and also Foucault 1986: 11; Hillier 1999 and El- chardus et al. 2000: 24). We must be aware of the impact on the social and psychological milieu of a consumer society that teaches citizens how to think about themselves and their goals. Citizens’ tastes, priorities and value systems are, to a large degree, manipulated by the very markets that are supposed to serve them (Hamilton 2004: 66). Within (and constrained by) this established frame of the market society, places and communities face the challenge to construct (or reject) and implement the discourses of cultural diversity, sustainability and place quality and subsequently to creatively transform their own functioning and practice. In the context of this paper, the latter points to changes in governance referring to current and historical relations of dominance and oppression (Young 1990). As planning and governance cannot be looked upon as separate, autonomous spheres within society, in the next section, I look for a type of governance that interlinks with the planning approach outlined above.

**Governance**

I argue that a feasible and efficient planning process should be centered on the elaboration of a mutual, beneficial dialectic between top-down structural policies and bottom-up local unique-ness. Besides a bottom-up approach, rooted in conditions and potentialities of diversity (interpreted in their broadest sense), a complementary multi-level, top-down policy aimed at introducing fundamental and structural changes is indispensable. Indeed, a mere top-down and centrally organized approach runs the danger of overshooting the local, historically evolved and accumulated knowledge and qualification potential, while a one-dimensional emphasis on a bottom-up approach tends to deny, at least to underestimate, the importance of linking local differences to structural macro tendencies (Albrechts and Swyngedouw 1989). This dialectic constitutes the bare essence of multi-level governance.

**Pluralist and Interculturalist Places**

Some politicians are reluctant to involve the public in decision-making because it involves giving up some control, and people who hold power are usually not inclined to give it up or share it. In other places, there is a tendency to involve major actors in the process. As spatial planning has almost no potential for concretizing strategies, relevant actors are getting involved who are needed for their substantive contribution, their procedural competences and the role they might play in acceptance, getting basic support and providing (a kind of) legitimacy. But planning, potentially, has an impact on and links to a very wide range of issues (from citizens with interests in a specific place to nature itself). These interests can be very diverse and conflicting. To overcome a commodified representation, nature must get a voice to reveal its intrinsic values (natural stability in ecosystems, biodiversity) as well as the more intangible cultural (aesthetic, symbolic) values (see also Sachs and Esteva 2003; Hillier 1999).

Creating futures must be done under conditions of inequality and diversity. Any change has to deal with issues of power and resistance, the irreconcilability of certain forms of interests. This requires a democratic polity that can encompass the realities of difference, inequality, etc., (Huxley 2000) and uses public involvement to present real political opportunities, learning from action not only what works but also what matters.

Increased personal mobility has made places more mixed. This can be seen as a threat or an opportunity. On the one hand, it can destabilize a place as migrants bring in habits, attitudes and skills alien to the original society, on the other, it can enrich and stimulate possibilities...
by creating hybrids, crossovers and boundary blurring (Landry 2000: 264). Civil society must be creative with mutual understanding between cultures and ideas of equity (this is nothing less than a claim to full citizenship, see Sandercock 2003: 98). Interculturalism (Landry 2000) builds bridges, helps foster cohesion and conciliation and produces something new out of the multicultural patchwork of places (Landry 2000) so that views of a place with minority groups or otherwise socially excluded groups are taken into account and their ideas are brought in to change planning, political decision-making and implementation.

**Learning Processes**

Society as a whole (citizens as well as politicians) feels uneasy thinking beyond the short term and reflecting on multiple futures, and it takes an unconsciously deterministic view of events. How to convince citizens, politicians and planners that they can have meaningful choices and will not have to be a complete prisoner of circumstances? How to make different groups in a place aware that they are interdependent (they share the same physical space, they may face similar problems) and that they cannot solve some problems on their own? How to make them aware that they may lose if they don’t cooperate? How to convince them to consider the alternative to what they felt in their hearts? Yet, when the sustainability, quality and equity of places are at stake, then this is exactly what we may need to do: imagine alternative futures in order to master change.

Building scenarios can become a learning process if it looks in an open way to the future, if it integrates knowledge of what might happen with an understanding of the driving forces and a sense of what it means to a place and its citizens. The active participation in a collective activity of scenario building may generate trust as participants in the process are likely to find – and why that is the case – that some scenarios present a future that people would like to inhabit, while others are considered highly undesirable. The process helps the participants think more broadly about the future and its driving forces and to realize that their own actions may move a place towards a particular kind of future. The process allows participants to step away from entrenched positions and identify positive futures that they can work at creating. It allows for a high degree of ownership of the final product and illustrates that citizens do have a responsibility for their future. So the real test is not whether one achieves the “conceived” future correctly, but whether anyone changed his/her behavior because he/she saw the future differently (see Schwartz 1991).

**Multi-level Governance**

A multi-level governance approach would offer the potential to tease out causal linkages between global, national, regional, metropolitan and local change, while also taking account of the highly diverse outcomes of such interactions. The dialectic between shifts in institutionalal sovereignty towards supranational regulatory systems in the Hasselt case, the possible impact of European directives for deregulation of public transport, and the principle of subsidiarity, which entails the rooting of policy action in local initiatives and abilities, illustrates the embeddedness of place policy-making in multiple institutional domains and interaction arenas that blur the meaning of hierarchical settings in the development of policies (see Gualini 2001).

The idea of multi-level governance is very well represented in the Hasselt case. Concern about traffic problems at the very local level are linked to the public works department at the level of the Flemish government (subsidies for the reconstruction of the first ring road), the public transport company (free public transport) and the overall city finances (reconstruction of the first ring road, no third ring road and compensation for losses of the bus company). Political and civil servant networks, of their own making, were very instrumental in this process.

In a new governance culture, the construction of arenas (who has to be involved, and what issues must be discussed), their timing (links to the strategic momentum), the definition of which arenas seem fixed and what issues in arenas seem fixed, and, the awareness that fixed may be relative in some contexts, all need careful reflection and full attention.

**Impact for Planners**

For too long, planners have just been (still are?) trained to react to problems and difficulties, and are focused on reproducing answers on the basis of similar problems encountered in the past. They ask, “What have I been taught in planning school or work that will solve this problem?” Then they analytically select the most promising approach based on past experiences excluding all other approaches, and work in this
clearly defined direction toward the solution of the problem.

A change of this attitude is crucial for creativity. Planners must think productively (Michalko 2001). Hence the need to challenge their “mental models” about places and to lift the “blinders” that limit their creativity and resourcefulness can be used as a building block for designing and formulating structurally new concepts and discourses (see Schwartz 1991). When confronted with a problem, planners have to ask themselves in how many different ways they can look at the problem, how they can rethink it, and how many different ways they can tackle it, instead of asking how they have been taught to solve it (see the Hasselt case).

Planners must be able to grasp the momentum and they must try to come up with many different responses, some of which are unconventional, and possibly even unique (see Michalko 2001: 2). Hence, planners need a mind-set that is willing to explore new concepts, new ideas and to look for alternatives (to the settlement hierarchy, to a clear division between town and country). Alternatives mean structurally different futures and not just variations on the same theme. That means that the planner must look for a transformative agenda (see Friedmann 1987: 389 for transformative theory² and Sandercoc 2003: 157–179 for transformative practices). This takes decision-makers, planners and citizens out of their comfort zones and compels them to confront key beliefs, to challenge conventional wisdom, and to look at the prospects of “breaking out of the box”.

**Conditions for Creativity**

The conditions below may not be looked upon in a linear way, they are clearly interrelated.

In planning systems and governance structures, a climate conducive to new ideas must be created. Planners need to think beyond customary job descriptions and traditional government structures to address problems in new ways and to accept that the past is no blueprint for how to go forward. Governments and planners need to trust the creativity of residents, they must acknowledge that there are multiple publics and that planning and governance in a new multicultural era requires a new kind of multicultural literacy and a new kind of democratic politics:

---

Figs. 4 and 5: The shuttle bus runs every 5 minutes. (Photos: Maarten Albrechts)
more participative, more deliberative, more agonistic.

In order to build trust and confidence in the planning, decision-making and implementation process, an adequate and timely response is required to serious, significant problems being faced by the community, seen as social entities of citizens who are engaged with their place (see free shuttle bus in Hasselt as answer to hindrance by local road works). Creativity in the long-term view is important and possible as long as it is combined with creativity in short-term actions. This combination of long-term perspective with short-term actions allows the community to react almost immediately to certain urgent problems with a clear perspective as to where it is going and what the likely impact of decisions are. It also promotes the building of trust, understanding and confidence in the process and between the actors. This means that we need a vision that embodies what is intended (this is the long-term strategy), concrete actions in response to the everyday problems, and longer-term actions for the realization of possible futures.

Planning is not an abstract analytical concept, but a concrete socio-historical practice, which is indivisibly part of social reality. As such, planning is embedded in politics (it is about making choices), and cannot escape politics (it must make values and ethics transparent), but is not politics (it does not make the ultimate decisions). Since planning actions are clear proof that they are not only instrumental, the implicit responsibility of planners can no longer simply be to “be efficient”, to function smoothly as neutral means of obtaining given and presumably well-defined ends. Planners must be more than navigators keeping their ship on course. They are necessarily involved with formulating that course (see Forester 1989).

To give power to the range of images in a planning process requires the capacity to listen, not just for an expression of material interest, but for what people care about, including the rage felt by many who have grown up in a world of prejudice and exclusion, of being outside, of being “the other” (Forester 1989; Healey 1997). Forester (1989) stresses that planners must use the power available to them to anticipate and to counter the efforts of interests who threaten to make a mockery of a democratic planning process by misusing their power. It must be clear that planners can (and do) use their power also in the opposite way.

Most of the reflections and suggestions I have made here have already been on the agenda for years and one wonders why they don’t get through.

How to Enhance Creativity?

Landry (2000) and Michalko (2001) teach us that to create original ideas and creative so-
utions, we must use appropriate techniques. Landry (2000) argues that all authors dealing with creativity, imagination and visioning are making three points: patterns of thought can change; ideas can be liberated through tools; and new solutions can be found. They do so by utilizing techniques to increase the number of ideas, to generate new ideas and to reframe old ideas. For Michalko (2001), these techniques vary from seeing what no one else is seeing to thinking what no one else is thinking. The first category involves knowing how to see and making thoughts visible. The second category involves thinking fluently, making novel combinations, connecting the unconnected, looking at the other side, looking in other worlds, finding what you are not looking for and awakening the collaborative spirit.

The first category brings us to look at problems and challenges from different perspectives: the perspectives of the elderly, youngsters, women, shopkeepers, business people, etc. Turn a problem, for example, a cost, into an asset. Moreover, offering the actors the possibility to express themselves in more than one language and communicative form (writing, oral, drawing, maps, music) could help remove barriers to creativity when taking part in debates and decisions about places. The second category is about generating new and more ideas (using brainstorming), combining and recombining ideas, images, and thoughts into different combinations and focusing on the collective intelligence of a group as being more than the intelligence of an individual. All these techniques match very well with the nature of scenarios.

Epilogue

The development of a planning and governance culture with the qualities summarized above is a demanding ambition for politicians, civil servants, citizens and planners. Are they a utopian dream? Are they feasible? I’ll start to answer these questions by quoting a story Clive Hamilton (2004: 240) tells in his provocative book Growth Fetish. It is about a black South African he met shortly after the fall of white rule. This man told him that he and his comrades had always feared the white government and system of apartheid as an enormously powerful and nearly unbeatable force. As the system began to crumble in the early 1990’s, he began to see the regime as more like “The Wizard of Oz”. When Dorothy first met the Wizard, she quaked before a towering dark figure with a booming voice. But after a time she peeks behind the curtain to see a frail old man pedalling a machine that creates the illusion of a huge and terrifying wizard. Although The Wizard of Oz is good-natured, Hamilton (2004: 240) concludes from this story that nothing is inevitable and no power is invincible.
So what kinds of “powers” need to be addressed? Anxiety about the “other” is strengthening right-wing, anti-immigrant parties in most European cities (see Albrechts 2003; Sandercock 2003). There is growing evidence that the current pattern of material consumption is environmentally unsustainable and that more economic growth and more technology will not solve this problem (see Mishan 1967; Sachs and Esteva 2003; Hamilton 2004). For Hamilton, (2004) growth fetishism and the predominantly market-led society lie at the heart of these ills. Concepts of sustainability and of a multicultural society applauded in many government reports cannot be achieved with more market (Sachs and Esteva 2003; Hamilton 2004), by extrapolating the past and the present, by simply relying on economic growth (Mishan 1967; Hamilton 2004), or by keeping to vested concepts, discourses and practices. As society is not a prisoner of its past and does have a responsibility for the future, it is challenged to find alternatives, to study the forces of change and to look for means and instruments to make this change happen.

This means that we need to structurally transform our attitudes toward the natural environment and our relationships with others (especially “the other”). This needs structural reforms in power relationships to tackle the overpowering dominance of the market and institutional reform. There are strong manifestos for change, for reconsidering the absolute faith in economic growth (Mishan 1967; Hamilton 2004), for living interculturally (Landry 2000; Sandercock 1998, 2003), and for a more sustainable society (Sachs and Esteva 2003).

What can planning and planners contribute in this respect? Many of the ideas I have formulated already exist in the dispersed experience of global best practice (see Landry 2000; Healey 2004a and the Hasselt case). Planners have to grasp the momentum; they have to lure citizens and politicians outside the comfort and familiarity of their traditional mind-set, concepts and mode of operation. They have to explore with them a set of distinctive, plausible and sustainable (in the broadest sense) futures that could unfold. This demands creativity and a thorough understanding and analysis of the driving forces of change and of what might be. Hence the need for a type of planning that embraces creativity and critical analysis. This kind of planning is very much concerned with “possibilities”, and “what ought to be”. In creativity, there is a dimension of “new”, a dimension of bringing something into being and a dimension of values.

Now, I come back to my four initial questions. First, I presented a planning approach that avoids two traps that planning is usually confronted with: the trap of linearity and the trap of being stuck in regulations. This planning approach combines, behind creativity, the strategic force of reverse thinking with a critical analysis of the driving forces at work in present. It constructs “better” futures for overcoming the resistance of the established powers in the realization of desired outcomes. Second, scenarios match seamlessly with our planning approach. They have the potential to open up the minds of people and can serve as learning devices for rehearsing qualitative and sustainable futures and how to get there. Third, the proposed governance culture opts for a more hybrid mode of democracy open to diversity and structural change embedded in norms, attitudes and practices. This culture makes it possible for ideas, concepts and discourses to travel to other departments, consultants, agencies, political levels, citizens’ associations, etc. Fourth, the plea for a transformative agenda challenges existing knowledge, conventional wisdom and practices, and the attitudes and skills of planners. Many of the ideas and suggestions I have made already exist in several cases and practices (see Landry 2000 for “best” practices and Albrechts 2005 for references on strategic planning), which means that they are “realistic” in certain specific contexts. Today, they provide a fertile laboratory for experimenting with different planning and governance cultures.

Acknowledgments

Thanks to Patsy Healey and Jean Hillier for their comments on a previous version of this paper.

Notes

A more extended version of this paper will be published in Planning Theory.

1 Although “imposed” may refer to top-down jargon, I use the term very deliberately. As soon as directions, based on an emancipatory practice, are agreed upon, they must be imposed for action.

2 Friedmann’s account of transformative theory is drawn directly from the social mobilization paradigm of planning.

References


Prof. Dr. Louis Albrechts
Catholic University of Leuven
Faculty of Engineering
Department ASRO
Kasteelpark Arenberg 51
B-3001 Leuven
louis.albrechts@asro.kuleuven.be
Strategic Spatial Planning

A Historical Review of Approaches, its Recent Revival, and an Overview of the State of the Art in Italy

Francesca S. Sartorio

Abstract: The last century left us with various definitions and interpretations of strategic spatial planning. What seems clear today is that strategic planning could be considered a set of concepts, procedures and tools (Albrechts 2004), usefully adaptable to fit the current planning needs of modern states and local societies in Europe. At the beginning of the 1990s, many experiences from all over the continent caught the interest of theorists and practitioners and started a long debate on the revival of strategic spatial planning (Salet and Faludi, eds., 2000). If we look at the practices though, it is evident that the approaches and goals are diverse and inevitably strongly related to specific local contexts. During the last decade, a particularly significant one for Italy due to the many social and institutional changes, several metropolitan areas and city-regions have been experimenting with strategic plans. These plans are aimed at encouraging local actors to get together and develop shared visions for the future. Even if a few common features are recognizable in all these plans, each of these tools is context-specific and develops particular procedures aimed at specific goals. An evaluation of this fruitful endeavour is not yet unequivocally possible, but the creative potential of these informal tools is already evident in the discovery of new actors and forms of local action, the development of local governance at variable geometries and in fostering local endogenous seeds of development.

Introduction

This essay consists of three parts. It starts with a synthetic review of the different meanings of strategy and of strategic planning used in past decades in discourses related to both planning theory and practice. Once the general inheritance and discontinuities have been presented, the particular features of strategic planning in Italy during the last decade will be pointed out, against the background of recent social and institutional changes, and through a synthetic description of eleven strategic plans which have been currently adopted, discussed or simply presented. The article concludes by highlighting the creative potential of these tools both for spatial planning dimensions and for governance agreements.

1 The Many Meanings of the Terms Strategy and Strategic Planning

1.1 A General Framework

Generally, we could see the wider sphere (or field, in Bourdieu’s meaning of the term) of planning as a weakly structured whole of different practices. Because of its weak structure, the boundaries of the wider sphere (or field) of planning are not clearly defined (Pasqui 1998). If we look at the practices though, it is evident that the approaches and goals are diverse and inevitably strongly related to specific local contexts. During the last decade, a particularly significant one for Italy due to the many social and institutional changes, several metropolitan areas and city-regions have been experimenting with strategic plans. These plans are aimed at encouraging local actors to get together and develop shared visions for the future. Even if a few common features are recognizable in all these plans, each of these tools is context-specific and develops particular procedures aimed at specific goals. An evaluation of this fruitful endeavour is not yet unequivocally possible, but the creative potential of these informal tools is already evident in the discovery of new actors and forms of local action, the development of local governance at variable geometries and in fostering local endogenous seeds of development.

Statutory modes of planning, as with most “hard” institutionalized modes of dealing with territory, constitute a part of the institutionalized system of planning.

We have already said that the more external boundary generally does not have a clear definition. The same could be said about the fine line
that marks the boundary between the two entities: it is permeable and mobile. Its permeability and mobility are not constant and depend as much on local characteristics as on global contingencies, on voluntary efforts and spontaneous dynamics. The fine line around institutionalization is the main site of social invention. We could say that as the global and local conditions change, each local society changes its assets, either in a reactive or in a proactive way. Planning has to change (and in fact does change) accordingly in order to respond to new questions posed by new assets. Practices (usually) respond first and some of the practices then enter processes of more or less directed institutionalization, which could be characterized by shorter or longer temporal phases and more or less hard stages of institutionalization.

1.2 Theory

Strategic spatial planning and, even more generally, the use of strategy in planning are highly ambiguous concepts. Claudio Calvaresi argues that strategic planning cannot be assumed to be an autonomous and recognizable object within planning theory (Calvaresi 1997). Looking deeper, in fact, it clearly appears that strategy within planning has, and has had in the past, several different meanings. Some were developed within the discipline while others were absorbed from other disciplines. In addition, the multifaceted field of planning has been using the various available features of the term strategic in numerous ways over the last fifty years. Calvaresi adds something more: he writes that reconnecting the different meanings used within the discipline in a linear and unifying interpretation would produce a fake process, one that never really took place. He suggests as a convenient approach one that prefers reconstruction to exegesis (Calvaresi 1997); such an approach could be of some help in foreseeing possible useful applications of the word strategic in practice. I fully agree with this position and would add one point to the argument. Historicizing and contextualizing each meaning of the terms strategy and strategic has probably always been present in planning. Strategy as a response to external stimuli and as part of a complex process only enters the sphere of planning later. From this point of view, probably the first systematic use of the terms strategy and strategic planning in our discipline took place during the debates about structural planning, which has interested planners in Britain, the Netherlands, France and Germany (with different origins, implications and outcomes) since the beginning of the 1960s. Within this framework, strategy is not only meant as the development of long-range visions, but also related to a process and to inter-institutional interaction. It is important to note that the theories developed in those

Figure 1: The different specialities of planning revolving like Saturn’s moons around the missing core of the discipline. (Kunzmann 2002: 331, redrawn)
years were deeply marked by a rapid economic and demographic development that demanded some framework for spatial transformation. In those years, the debate about structural planning [and strategic planning] contributed to the expansion of the wider sphere of planning.\(^5\)

In the mid-1970s, and even more in the 1980s, after the sudden interruption of the growth conditions, which had been assumed to be the norm, and the general crisis of the discipline, planning needed the development of new theories and methods for action. The discipline had not been capable of facing the problems of quick urbanization in practice and had to deal with theoretical questions posed by the development of critical theories within other disciplines (i.e., Lindblom, March and Olsen, Simon, etc.) as well as internally. Parallel to the already existing definitions of strategy and strategic planning practices, another meaning of the term developed. The years of economic crisis marked the entrance of the market (together with its rationality and its jargon) in planning. On one side, tools used by private enterprises seemed adequate to respond and stop the decline of cities, and, a new type of strategic planning entered the scene.\(^6\) On the other side, and in parallel, the rhetoric of competition started among cities. Those years see not only the beginning of a phase when the state got involved as a private actor with its own interests and stakes in the planning process, but also witnesses the official entrance of private investors as the first nongovernmental actors within the planning process. This time, strategy and strategic planning worked to include new dimensions in the sphere of planning.\(^7\)

During the 1990s, the context changed again. There was a general crisis in which powerful actors and the representation structures, on which modern society had been based, slowly lost their importance (authoritativeness) and efficiency. Answers coming from the planning side used the tools developed in the previous decades, but at the same time a new horizon was emerging. Within the theories, policy analysis had developed awareness among planners of an enlarged sphere for planning, including several actors who were linked in interactive and informal modes. And in practice, the real demand from society required planning action. This last type of strategic planning was the beginning of civil society being included in the sphere of planning.

All these different types of strategic planning partially coexist today, even in their divergent dimensions. The understanding and use of the term deals much more with personal experience and the approach of each single practitioner or researcher (or a group thereof) than with a generally codified attitude within the discipline. Accordingly, the practice of strategic planning varies consistently, Willem Salet and Andreas Faludi (Salet and Faludi 2000) identify three main approaches to strategic spatial planning at the beginning of the new century:

- An institutional approach, which favors two main directions: one oriented at legitimizing planning activity, the other seeing institutionalization processes mainly as an opportunity for the implementation of plans and projects.
- A communicative and discursive approach that favors framing and sense-giving activity; an interactive approach, suspended in a technocratic tension, oriented to building up connections between public and private organizations in order to improve performance in planning.
- A sociocratic tendency, focused on the inclusion of society and emergent citizenship.

1.3 Practice

If we look directly at practices, even if a wide use of the term has been made in the past decade, general definitions are preferred to specific ones and probably the most appropriate description is: A set of concepts, procedures and tools that must be tailored carefully to whatever situation is at hand if desirable outcomes are to be achieved (Bryson and Roering 1996 as in Albrechts 2004). In fact, the many types of strategic planning actually applied involve, in different ways and with different focuses, various aspects of practice absorbed at different times in planning history. Such an interpretation is in line with the understanding of planning as a discipline that is shaping itself in and through practice and, in doing so, mirrors an image of the culture and environment that produced it.
At the beginning of the 1990s, the debate on strategic planning gained momentum again and since then several strategic plans have been produced at the city and city-regional levels. The reasons to return to strategic planning were similar to those of the previous decade, a lack of public money and entrepreneurial approaches to urban management, but the necessity of a wider acceptance for action emerged as a consequence of the deep crisis of representation, which had affected the European social and political context during the previous decade. Patry Healey (Healey 1997; Healey 1998; Healey 2003a; Healey 2003b) has widely studied strategic planning tools all across Europe, following an institutionalist approach. She describes strategic spatial planning as a social process through which local communities answer to endogenous and exogenous challenges relating to territorial governance. If this definition fits most recent experiences, then the distinction made by Salet and Faludi (Salet and Faludi 2000) is also useful for examining practices.

Generally, what they argue in the introductory chapter of their jointly edited book seems true: the second of the three approaches to strategic planning described above, the interactive one, suspended between sociocratic and technocratic attitudes, prevails today. It usually takes the form of a list of major objectives to achieve, not necessarily physical, which are each articulated in several specific goals. The main strategic plans of the 1990s have this form (Lyon, Barcelona, Glasgow, Turin, etc.). The generating process usually followed to produce the document and the strategy is voluntary and generally open and participative, although the actors included and the openness of the process depends on the different local situations and the promoters. Even though each plan seems to favor different action areas and different specific aspects, for the sake of synthesis and based on their form and generating process, we could call them a family of strategic plans.

In parallel to this family of strategic plans, the concept of a strategy is also appearing with constantly growing frequency in very traditional procedures, tools and routines. The use of the term differs widely, from referring to what is called or seen as strategic, e.g., dimensions of plan-making (not necessarily explicit); levels of planning; typical features of projects and specific interventions, policies and actions (Riganti 1996) to when strategy has to do with the process and the reason why there is a need for strategy, e.g., efficiency of public action, democracy, etc.; to the participants, e.g., which actors and groups or types thereof enter the process, etc., and in many cases where it is perhaps not strictly appropriate. A very useful schematic distinction of strategy in planning practice today comes from Luigi Mazza. He makes a distinction between urban strategies (strategie urbane) and planning strategies (strategie urbanistiche). The former relate to the activation and maintenance of a proactive and efficient decision-making system, and because of this are mainly connecting with the political dimensions of planning. The latter is more related to the traditional fields of spatial planning and connected to the achievement of physical spatial goals through a selective process.

In an extreme synthesis, all the various implemented strategies related to planning in this last decade fall into one of these two strategy types. It is interesting to note that somehow they also relate to the two different “souls” of planning in Europe mentioned earlier: one as part of social sciences, the other born of architecture-related disciplines.
1.4 Strategy as a Pressure Element

The synthetic résumé of the previous section shows how difficult it is to assess the continuity within the different discourses that deal with strategic planning and strategy in planning and partially explains the initial assumption about the impossibility of identifying strategic planning as an autonomous and recognizable object. There are, of course, a few recurrent topics, placed against a background of a generally unstable and risky environment, within these discourses:

- The necessity of planning for a generic (even if differently defined) longer range
- Comprehensiveness, i.e., seeing the progressive replacement of a comprehensive entity achieved by a few specialists with expert knowledge collecting as much information as possible, with a comprehensive entity produced by the interaction of as many actors as possible, each contributing different types of common knowledge
- The presence of several actors and rationales
- Interactivity
- Process orientation
- Interconnectivity

But, what appears more significant is that it seems that the use of the term strategy has been employed mainly in phases of wider openness of the discipline and it has contributed to expanding the field of spatial planning and the absorption of new concepts and practices. It has welcomed new actors (and different rationales) and new procedures into the process. To go back to the scheme representing the wider sphere of planning and the institutionalized system of planning, somehow “strategy,” whatever the type, lies on the fine line of the institutionalization of planning practices that marks the boundaries between the wider sphere of planning and the institutionalized system of planning.

So, I think that what Patsy Healey says concerning strategic planning is absolutely true: “Finally, the experiences of episodes of strategic spatial planning show that, in certain contexts and with intellectually shrewd and energetic political effort, strategies can accumulate sufficient power to change discourses and to transfer these discourses into the arenas of investment and regulatory practices.” ([Healey 2003a: 26])

Furthermore, I suspect that it could also be considered true even in episodes where strategic spatial planning does not necessarily refer “[…] to self-conscious collective efforts to re-imagine a city, urban region or wider territory and to translate the results into the priorities for area investment, conservation measures, strategic infrastructure investments and land use regulations,” ([Healey 2003c] and where strategic plan-making does not necessarily constitute “[…] a social process through which a range of people in diverse institutional relations and positions come together to design plan-making processes and develop contents and strategies for the management of spatial change.” ([Healey 1997: 5]).

The impression is, in the end, that in the last few decades the term has been mainly used as some sort of pressure element within the discipline, acting on the fine line dividing the institutionalized system from the wider field of planning. Strategic planning has been progressively driving new dimensions relating to the actual context into our discipline, which could help in responding to needs coming from the territories and, more specifically, from the new governance demands for territories. The general hypothesis is that strategy and strategic planning in general are more important for the concentrated charge of innovative elements that move within local contexts than for the nature and content of what is understood under the term strategic. And, that territories where some sort of strategic experiment has been taking place could be more likely than others to develop innovative and creative capacities in the field of planning and beyond.

2 Strategic Planning in Italy in the 1990s

After synthesizing the various meanings of strategic spatial planning, this section will focus on Italy. The first part gives a general outline of the changes that occurred in the country during the 1990s, a period of deep transition due to various social, political and economic events. The second part focuses specifically on the first Italian strategic planning session. Even if, given their different nature and goals, each case could be presented and discussed on its own, there are some common features that could be recognized in the eleven tools defined as strategic plans by their promoters and presented or at various stages of development. In this article, we do not consider the urban planning tools that make use of strategy in connection with the development of simple spatial planning goals. Borrowing Mazza’s definition, we focus here on tools related to strategie urbane (urban strategies) rather than on strategie urbanistiche (planning strategies).
2.1 A Decade of Deep Change for Italy

In the years between 1993 and 2000, Italy started three different medium- and long-term reform programs: the first in representation, the second on planning, the third on public competitions and contracts. All of them are, for different reasons, of some importance here in order to understand the context within which this particular session for planning in Italy took place.

With regard to the reform on representation, the first outcome is particularly relevant for urban planning: the direct election of city mayors by the citizens. Since 25 March 1993, in accordance with State Law No. 81, candidates from different coalitions present themselves and their programs (Programma del Sindaco) directly to the people. This change produced three main consequences: more power, at least in local politics, given to good candidates and a consecutive lessening of importance of the party structures; a consequent change of strategy from the parties in preparing for local elections; and a relevant role given to the Programma del Sindaco. This latter document in particular constitutes an important step for local politics and planning. It consists of a list of things to do within four years, upon which the yearly economic programs will be drawn up. Being the main document on which the activity of the mayor will be evaluated after the completion of the mandate, it usually contains short-to-medium-term projects with as big an impact as possible. In these new conditions, the need for a longer term framework soon appeared in the debates.

The second reform, concerning planning laws, has been in demand in Italy since shortly after World War II. At that time, the entire reconstruction and urban regeneration had been achieved through a 1942 law designed for a very different scope, a nation suddenly pursuing very quick development. Even though the debate on new planning regulations started several times, only recently had the matter found a solution, driven by the transformation of the central state into a federalist state, rather than by the debate on planning itself. Nevertheless, the planning reform proposal presented by the National Planning Institute (INU – Istituto Nazionale di Urbanistica) in 1995 produced not only the formation of a parliamentary commission but also the development of a lively debate on planning issues and innovation within scientific as well as professional institutions.11

In 1993, the reform process on rules concerning public competitions and public contracts also started. The series of laws giving a transparent and strict basis to public procedures ended in 2000 with the so-called Merloni ter. This reform process started after the great national scandal commonly known as Tangentopoli, an inquiry into corruption in planning in Milan which showed connections with powerful networks operating at the national level, which was not just a call for transparency within institutions but also a call from the market. Before then, public contracts were substantially closed to international investments, sometimes also to national investors based in other cities. This produced a lack of quality in the implementations and a very stagnant market. The newly introduced procedures assured clarity and opened the way to a more fruitful and transparent collaboration of public and private forces, particularly needed in a decade characterized by the scarcity of public funds.

As a consequence of these changes, urban policies and planning modes changed visibly during the 1990s. Both the election reform of mayors and the federalist project modified the time-frame that local authorities had taken for considering projects, a shift from a 10/15 year period to a mere four years, and produced a growing concern for planning issues in bodies previously not having any role in the planning process. These were due to the debate on planning reform, which stayed lively for the entire decade, and the subsidiarity principle, which moved many duties12 a step downwards in the political and administrative hierarchy. Of particular relevance in this regard was the introduction of a further intermediate level within big cities, having not just an elected council but also planning duties, which produced a further fragmentation of the local arenas. Civil society emerged in all its powerful dimensions during this time and the national scandal on corruption fed into and gave weight to this phenomenon. Altogether, during the 1990s, cities were the territorial entity at the forefront of many changes and had to find ways to effectively develop a new planning culture, while still managing to reduce conflict and build consensus in their arenas; to find a balance between elected and demonstrative public participation to decision making processes; and finally to face the decrease in public funding.

2.2 The Italian Road to Strategic Planning

One of the solutions tried was the production of so-called Piani strategici. During the 1990s, even if it was not a legal requirement, as are land use plans and other planning regulations,
several large and medium-sized cities in Italy produced a strategic plan. Those plans, started completely on a voluntary basis, take different forms according to the different situations where they were produced. Given the different character of the territories and local areas, summarized along with the various rationales and goals behind each plan, it is very difficult to sketch a synthetic picture of strategic planning in Italy. Highlighting the differences might have been more fruitful than trying to find similarities, nevertheless, what follows is an analysis of the common features in Italian spatial plans, which could be helpful in understanding the Italian peculiarities of the phenomenon, particularly for a foreign audience.

Generally, the central element of Italian strategic plans consists of a (most often written) document with a vision for the city and its surrounding territory. This document usually develops strategic topic areas, articulated into several thematic threads, each of which has one or more projects. The document does not usually present a mere physical leitbild; it tries to connect the social, economic and physical dimensions into a single, pragmatic vision (Bobbio and Gastaldi 2000) and to find a general agreement on its choices from the different actors (social, economic and public) active in the local arena. In a pragmatic and goal-oriented perspective, these strategic plans start from the acknowledgement that neither the City Council nor the whole of the public actors have all the elements (competences, money, etc.) to make an exhaustive decision on the best solution.

Some critics argue that strategic plans are primarily economic development tools (they are remarkably often initiated and/or fostered by local departments responsible for economic development, rather than by the planning departments), even if they call, in more or less rhetorical fashion, for participation and involvement. If it is in principle true that most Italian strategic plans respond to general calls to competition and globalization (Bobbio and Gastaldi 2000; Pugliese and Spaziante 2003), attention must be paid to the ways those tools are produced and to the processes they start locally.

The tools are always initiated at the local level and comprise actors from public bodies, civil society and the market. Usually the city council plays the role of promoter (but not always: exceptions are Torino Internazionale initiated by Forum per lo sviluppo, a group chaired by the local Chamber of Commerce and made up of the most active economic and social actors, and Progettare Firenze, promoted by a committee where the city, the Chamber of Commerce and the University all play an important role). The processes start in different ways. In some cases, large forums (variously called: forum, stati generali, audizioni, etc.) constitute the first act in order to identify needs and start a framing action, as was done in Turin, Genoa, Piacenza, La Spezia, Trento, and Milano North. In other situations, the activities move from a series of reports by experts officially presented to the public and discussed (in the case of Pesaro, Roma, Trieste, Florence and Varese). After the first phase, once strategic areas of interest have been identified, work is usually organized around different themes in working groups or round tables, where interested actors meet regularly to move the discussion and action forward. In some cases, after a first general acknowledgement of priorities among the parties involved, the work is taken up by technical offices within the city or by founding and funding an ad hoc technical-mediating body (this happened in Rome and Trieste where the Risorse per Roma s.p.a. and Creta s.r.l. work on the plans; in Trento, the university takes charge of the studies for the strategic plan). Final choices and decisions are publicly presented and ratified by an agreement (Patto, Protocollo di intesa, etc.) among all parties. After the agreement, monitoring activity starts in order to evaluate the implementation of the projects and the general situation and to have a role in the definition and re-definition of priorities and of further thematic areas for action. The monitoring process also has various interpretations. In some cases, it takes the form of an evaluation made by experts with technical knowledge (e.g., Trento), whereas in most places the decision of taking the plan further and implementing projects is simply jointly discussed and a shared decision is taken.

Participating actors come from the public sector, the market and civil society within the metropolitan area: The interest in strategic plans usually exceeds communal boundaries and one of the focuses is inter-institutional work, particularly in dense and dynamic friction areas between bigger cities and their surrounding areas (in this regard, the case of the Agenzia di sviluppo Milano nord is topical, this acts on behalf of the territories of four cities in the northern area of Milan, with delegates from their mayors). At the same time, no strict boundary is defined and it usually keeps variable geometries. This is possible because strategic plans do not have any legal powers whatsoever, their power relies on collaborative work and understanding. Also, strategic plans are usually not drawn up and
when they are, their style is usually schematic and allusive rather than specific. Strategic areas identified obviously vary in each situation, but some of the most common and recurrent fields are international and European integration, institutional cooperation, urban quality, local welfare, technological innovation, culture and tourism. The temporal horizon they consider is usually around 10–15 years. This is made potentially possible because strategic plans are not the product of a specific administration (bound to a 4 or 8 year life span) but of a city as a whole (which in principle, remains).

The relationship between strategic plans and ordinary spatial planning tools is, again, very different from one situation to the other (Bobbio and Gastaldi 2000). In most cases, the strategic plan is formed just after the adoption of a new land use plan, the latter then forming the frame and basis upon which choices, principally those having physical dimension, are taken and on which priorities are defined (as in the case of Turin). In some other cases, the formulation of a land use plan and of a strategic plan take place at the same time (as in Pesaro, Genoa, Trento, Rome and Varese); these are complementary in their contents and keep a certain synergy in action as well. Occasionally, strategic plans occur in transition periods, where an old spatial plan is in place but visions for the future are needed in order to define new priorities (La Spezia, Trieste, Florence). Generally, strategic plans have proved to be more effective than ordinary planning tools in framing visions, because their goal is much more straightforward than land use plans, which in Italy have at least a double role in setting a vision for the future and in zoning areas to achieve its foreseen assets.

The results of this first Italian strategic planning session are not completely clear and defined yet. Some projects have been realized and some are on their way. Probably most of what has already been implemented refers to ideas already present locally and taken on board when the drafting of the strategic plan started. As in the case of Turin, where the land use plan had been carefully prepared and agreed and its projects prepared the way for the interventions focused on by the strategic plan; or in La Spezia, where the strategic plan included important interventions founded by the previously funded PRUSST. But, the field of efficiency of such tools has to be looked for elsewhere, particularly within soft-wares and org-wares rather than hard-wares: urban marketing first and, perhaps more interestingly, decision-making modes and local redefinition and rescaling in second and third place.

Figure 3: The scheme of the strategic planning process in Turin. (Torino Internazionale, http://www.notavtorin.org/documenti/spunti1.jpg) (Reprinted by courtesy of Milano Metropoli Agenzia di Sviluppo)
If, as we assumed, strategic plans come as an answer within a growing competition-led urban policy, their success is not yet unequivocally sure. In any case, what already seems clear, is that cities which have initiated a strategic planning process gain national and international recognition. This is true both for big cities as well as medium-sized ones. Whereas for the former, strategic plans help directly in urban marketing on a global scale, for the latter, those processes help to discover endogenous potential and build local collaborative arenas within their hinterlands and beyond. Turin’s bid for the winter Olympic Games 2006 was strongly supported by Torino Internazionale, and some medium-sized cities involved in strategic planning processes (Pesaro, La Spezia, Trento) have founded a network in order to circulate experiences, exchange ideas and disseminate good practices.

That said, probably the main result of this first decade is the formation of more or less strongly structured local networks interested in the future of their city and in the identification of common goals. Italian strategic plans undoubtedly make a contribution to opening decision-making processes at the local level to a more interactive approach, slowly abandoning traditional, entirely politically and technically driven, decision-making modes. Even if the definition of common interests and specific themes has generally been very slow in this first session, we have to acknowledge that it takes place within a culture where collective thinking and action are very new entrants to decision-making discourses and actual processes, which were traditionally dominated by a clear top-down approach and often spoiled by strong locally powerful networks acting behind the scenes. Strategic plans try to pull local actors together around a table and structure discourses within a framework that focuses on collective achievements. In the most successful cases, like Turin,
they manage to (at least partially) redefine local arenas and mobilize local resources (economic, institutional, social and human) towards agreed-upon goals. Even if it is clear that good results come not just from these plans, but are also the product of a fertile local milieu and the result of positive events, it is evident that they provide a platform that is actually not available elsewhere. In this respect, the initial input and their promoting body (in particular, its composition), added to their completely voluntary formation, are all fundamental elements. In any case, a lot will be defined at the local level according to what economic, social and political phenomena will occur in the coming years, at the moment, those results being (in all the cases examined) very soft and fragile and in need of continuous fostering and care from all interested parties.

Last but not least, the third result consists of strategic spatial planning experiences producing a redefinition and rescaling process for territories, starting from the local level. Whatever the initial input for all the cases examined, they do not concentrate on communal boundaries and do explore, at different stages, collaborations with innovative bases with neighboring communes, by opening discussions and starting completely new (not only regarding contents, but also the form they take) discourses with other public authorities at various levels. In a way, they factually shift the attention from cities as defined by their administrative boundaries to one or more operative definitions of a city as both working and living spaces, which sometimes overlap, and other times follow parallel paths. Strategic plans have proven to be altogether powerful instruments, for the rediscovery and redefinition of local potential and new synergies, and for finding new ways forward together and to defining new local scales of analysis and action. In doing so, they find a (non-technical) answer to a problem that spatial
planning in Italy has had since the 1980s: the [technical] dysfunction of political and administrative boundaries with respect to the growth in the size of cities.

Considering strictly current Italian planning debates, those experiments have produced one result not irrelevant for our discipline: that of opening a new phase of comprehensive planning, after the crisis of land use plans acknowledged in the 1970s–1980s and the concentration on single projects which characterized, with more or less local emphasis, urban policies of the 1980s and early 1990s. Altogether, we could say that strategic plans seem to be a way to answer a series of questions that statutory spatial planning and traditional modes of planning action have not yet been able to answer. At the same time, though, they propose several new and serious problems both at the political and the technical level which, if we want to try this new way, need urgent answers from society and also from the planning community in Italy – and elsewhere.

3 The Creative Potential of Italian Strategic Spatial Planning

Going through the various definitions that strategic planning got over the decades, in the opening section we could observe a selective sedimentation of meanings. Even if some threads were suddenly interrupted while others were taking the scene, and obvious discontinuities and problematic nodes appeared, we could clearly see a progressive movement within planning discourses from comprehensive to limited rationales, and towards the acknowledgement of different actors within planning processes. Parallel to that, strategy moved from being a set of given goals to an action mode informed by the context within which it takes place.

In the previous section, we saw that Italian strategic plans vary from case to case and that even single instruments do not follow a unique type of rationale throughout the entire process and follow multiple (and sometimes diverging) goals. As with most products of contemporary society, they are not pure fruits, but resemble instead complex hybrids. In their articulation, they seem though to follow the path that the definition of strategic planning has followed in the past ten years. Analyzing the debate relating to this last decade, it is apparent that it refers primarily to the process and that somehow the spatial dimension, even if indirectly present through images and cultural references, has disappeared. Also, it is clear that the context assumed now consciously has multiple actors: the public and the private actor, state and market are now acknowledged as extremes of the same line, and that planners are losing their traditional identity as technical professionals and becoming more and more a mediator and interpreter of society within planning processes. All these elements were present in the Italian strategic planning cases examined.

We closed the discussion on the meaning and role of strategy in planning and strategic planning by saying that strategy could generally be understood as a pressure element in the debate, opening discourses to new and innovative dimensions in planning theory and practice. This last paragraph tries to define the innovative and creative dimensions of the first Italian strategic planning session (shortly outlined and superficially described).

The first creative dimension of strategic planning is that it creates new territories. New territories are continuously defined by on-going debates on existing potential and new synergies, but also by the critical discussion on boundaries. Visions and images for the future help in finding a way but at the same time produce new frameworks for action and redefine social and economic limits and political and administrative boundaries. The visionary and story-telling dimensions of planning are in this respect central. Focusing on the Italian debates, respectively on metropolitan cities and city-regions, we see clearly how the debates in the former, legal entities introduced from the center in the 1990s, have been sterile on a theoretical as well as a practical level. Whereas the debates on the city-regions are mostly connected with inter-communal approaches, were started locally and from the bottom up, have grown in importance and had practical effects. We cannot say that strategic planning in Italy produced the city-regions, but it is certainly true that strategic planning processes have locally raised the general level of attention on real limits and boundaries and contributed to the collective creation of specific city-regions (this is particularly evident in the case of Milano nord, but also in Turin, Florence and Genoa).

The second creative dimension relies on the creation of new continuities between market forces and the state. In the area of competition among cities, strategic plans contribute to a slow progression of public actors and economic actors towards each other. Also, different from previous situations when public and private actors within local arenas would have worked to-
Strategic spatial planning creates

already:

**Territories**          **Local governance**
- visions               - stable platform
- limits and boundaries - continuity
- City regions          - state/market/civil society

potentially:

**Roles**          **Space and place**          **Planning**
- fair and democratic assessment for different actors - connect process, space and place - new roles, goals and rationales
- reciprocal interaction between local governance and planning - new technical dimensions

Table 2: The creative potential of spatial planning.

gather on specific projects on specific occasions, strategic planning processes provide platforms which enable ongoing contact and debate, and so provide stabilization of those relations as well as critical evaluation and development of shared experiences. This is probably one of the fields in which cities have to learn that initiating a platform is a good start, but developing a culture that keeps the access to this platform open and that fosters positive and balanced interaction between actors with different weights is a necessary step at this stage.

Another step that has to be developed in order to release a third creative potential for strategic planning relates to the definition of new rules for local governance. Statutory planning, and, more generally, institutionalized modes in planning, respond to a type of governance based principally on governmental action, as it has been in Italy and Europe throughout most of the last century. Some strategic planning experiences open the way to a more articulate relationship between new forms of local governance and planning processes. Whereas in the past century, planning was often reduced to the spatial technical dimension of governmental management and administrative activities, the landscape is changing dramatically today. We could nowadays imagine a reciprocal relationship between planning processes and local governance forms, which could positively balance and complement elected assemblies with direct democracy in decision-making processes. This perspective, which, in principle, opens the way to new developments in planning theory and practice, needs careful attention and evaluation in defining the rules of this (new) game, in order to keep it fair and democratic. Observing the Italian experience on strategic planning and the role and power civil society has within it, this is a very critical point, in my view, not adequately examined as yet.

As stated at the beginning of this section, strategic planning has gained new economic and social dimensions but, at the same time, has lost its spatial focus. I believe we could still rely on statutory planning instruments and institutionalized planning tools, even if stretched and customized, for a very short period. The general framework for planning is changing so quickly that soon technical instruments will also have to develop and change as well. As societies and their rules change, the tools connecting societies with their territories also have to change. The last decade has seen a lively debate on shifting governance modes and their relationship with planning, losing somehow the technical dimension that characterized spatial planning of the early years. I believe that together with its political dimensions, the technical dimensions of planning also have to adapt to the new scenarios because they implicitly define the duties and rights citizens have towards their community. A question that remained in the shadows is how to (re)connect technical and political arenas and institutional and social design with the physical definition and design of urban spaces and places. This opens the way to the definition of a completely new toolbox for planners, not just technical, but also in terms of roles, goals and rationales for planning.

Strategic spatial planning is creative with respect to the development of new territories and scales, to the definition of new continuities between state, market and civil society, and to the interaction with and creation of innovative local governance forms. But, if the creative potential of strategic planning in shaping and developing
spaces and places could at this point be quietly accepted and even assumed as a potential start for the redefinition of spatial planning for the new century, there are two questions that all urban actors would still have to bear in mind. The first is how to guarantee space and place for creative action within urban planning processes, between emerging practices and institutionalization processes. The second, referring primarily to the planning community, is how to reconnect urban strategies with planning strategies, strategie urbane and strategie urbanistiche.

Notes
1 I refer to Bourdieu’s concept of field, a whole of different elements, weakly structured or not structured at all. Different from a system, it constitutes an open and dynamic space for action, where limits are defined and redefined by the game played within its boundaries.
2 Citations not literally translated by the author.
3 Planners (Piroddi 1996; Lacaze 1996) have often referred to the well-known Sun Tzu Chinese handbook on the art of conducting war. Here, the focus is on four basic elements of strategy: the accurate understanding of the real situation, realistic goals, focused orientation of available strength in that direction, and persistence of the action until significant results have been achieved. Both the current understanding of the term and the military meaning highlight two recurrent elements: focusing on long-term goals and the presence of some sort of antagonist in the action. If the mere fixing of goals could imply a static understanding of what strategy is, the presence of a potential reaction, or counteraction, draws the attention immediately towards a more dynamic, iterative and interactive perspective.
4 The UK with the 1968 Town and Country Planning Act; the Netherlands following the 1965 Physical Planning Act; France with the 1967 Loi d’orientation foncière. It is generally acknowledged that up to that point in time the general understanding of planning was mainly as a zoning activity necessary in order to enhance the value of the offer in terms of real estate; the newly introduced context for planning sees it in its process dimension and introduces substantive rationality and a comprehensive perspective (Mazza 1987).
5 It is important to consider how, between the 1940s and the 1960s, the debate in the British context has been shaped by several theoretical contributions preparing the path for such big changes. Even if Geddes’s and Abercrombie’s seminal contributions on a systemic approach to planning did not have a specific resonance in the immediate situation, undoubtedly the series of handbooks produced by Chapin (Chapin 1965), McLoughlin (1968) and Chadwick (1971) within short time had a main relevance (Mazza 1987; Breheny and Batey 1984). Chapin describes planning activity as a cyclic, rational and comprehensive process and is the first author who draws public interest to justify specific choices. McLoughlin strengthens the paradigm by developing the systemic approach further into two directions of complexity relating both to scale and dimension, and exports its main features in the actual policy and political debates of the time. He draws widely from his professional experiences (focused on Teesside, Leicester and Leicestershire) and pays attention also to the North American situation. His Urban and Regional Planning: a Systems Approach has been translated and circulated its ideas in non-Anglophone countries. Finally, Chadwick goes on the path traced, describing planning as a hierarchical process, shaping the order in which a sequence of actions is implemented. Strategy is necessary, following this interpretation, in order to evaluate different operative hypothesis equally enabling one to reach the fixed goals, and he goes a step forward by highlighting the relation planning has with operational research. So, Chadwick prepares the field for the relevant contributions on the topic made by the Institute for Operational Research of the Tavistock Institute. During its famous study on Coventry (Friend and Jessop 1977), the IOR adopts the principles of policy analysis, producing a work that, even if embedded in a systemic approach, takes distance from it by discovering a new, incremental approach to planning based on the acknowledgement of an unstable, uncertain background characterized by multiple actors (and rationales) for any form of planning effort. Within this frame, the choice is defined as strategic and strategic planning is the form planning naturally takes in turbulent conditions.
6 The application of this sort of understanding of strategic planning, developed within the economic sciences for private enterprise and organizations, to the field of spatial planning has been done with some simplifications. This definition does in fact consider antagonists only outside the organization, and assumes internal cohesion among members of the organization on a mission, with its goals and preferred tools to achieve them. This could probably be true for organizations, but it is never true for cities, given the highly conflicting nature of urban arenas.
7 The economist who took the topic deeper is Henry Mintzberg (Mintzberg 1994; Mintzberg, Lampel, Quinn and Ghoshal 1996; Mintzberg, Ahlstrand and Lampel 1993). It is interesting to note how puzzled he is by the many different understandings of strategic planning in his field too. Throughout his work, Mintzberg’s main attempt is to structure the typologies of the mean-
ings of strategy according to their actual nature in practice. He defines five different typologies of the concept: as a plan, a conscious foreseen goal for action; as a ploy, a manoeuvre designed to beat an enemy; as a pattern, the particular form that the action takes, consciously or unconsciously (could be acknowledged right after the action); as a position, communicating the place and values of the organization to the outside world; and as a perspective, mainly looking inside the organization and mirroring its vision. Altogether, we could see some similarities with the definitions used in our field and could appreciate how much these thoughts have filtered into planning discourses. Henry Mintzberg also produced a matrix classifying different approaches from different schools of thought and their respective evolution from 1965 to 1995 (Mintzberg, Ahlstrand and Lampel 1999).

8 The theoretical work of Luigi Mazza, relating to the Italian context, is singular and exemplary for its coherence and cultural breadth and technical precision (Mazza 1994; Mazza 1995a; Mazza 1995b; Mazza 1999a; Mazza 1999b; Mazza (ed) 1999c; Mazza 2000; Mazza 2001; Mazza (ed) 2002; Mazza 2002), and has recently been used in an innovative planning approach for the city of Milan (i.e. Documento di Inquadramento).

9 We took into consideration the plans for Florence, Genoa, La Spezia, Milan Nord, Pesaro, Piacenza, Rome, Trento, Trieste, Turin, Varese.

10 Before the citizens had to vote for representatives of a party or coalition; the elected candidates of the winning coalition later voted for the mayor.

11 This indirectly produced a number of innovative experiments within the existing national planning laws and some new planning laws at the regional level.

12 Whereas, before the revision of Title V of the Constitution, legislative planning powers were allocated at state level, now regions in Italy all have legislative powers regarding planning. Other intermediate levels have been identified which have gained a role in the planning process.

13 PRUSST – Programma di riqualificazione urbana e sviluppo sostenibile del territorio, a competitive program launched and funded at the national level which fosters projects dealing with transport and sustainable development having an inter-communal dimension.

References


Special issues of journals: *Urbanistica Informazioni* No 182, 183, 184 (special issues on Italian strategic plans of the 1990s).

Internet sources:
ASNM – Associazione Sviluppo Milano nord: www.asnm.com
Patto per Piacenza: www.pattoperpiacentca.org
Piano strategico di Pesaro: www.comune.pesaro.ps.it
Piano strategico di Trento: www.comune.trento.it/progetti/ps/ps_index.htm
Piano strategico di Varese: www.comune.varese.it/news/3to500/piano/1.htm
Progettare Firenze: www.comune.firenze.it/progettarefirenze/
Torino Internazionale: www.torino-internazionale.org

Dr. Francesca S. Sartorio
Cardiff School of City and Regional Planning
Cardiff University
Glamorgan Building
King Edward VII Avenue
Cardiff, Wales, CF10 3WA
U.K.
SartorioF@cardiff.ac.uk
Government or Governance of Urban Innovation?

A Tale of Two Cities

Bruno Dente, Luigi Bobbio and Alessandra Spada

Abstract: The article discusses the relationship between urban innovation and new forms of governance. Although the concept of “governance” seems to be a panacea for any sort of market or state failure, very often it is ill-defined and/or ideologically loaded. However, there is a growing consensus that the mobilization of social and economic actors in “governmental” roles is an important, if not essential, factor in bringing about innovative policies, at least at the local scale. In our study, we derive from the existing literature on social capital and institutional development, the hypotheses that the more diverse the actors involved and the tighter their linkages, the better the innovative performance will be. In order to test these hypotheses, we have investigated two northern Italian cities, Milan and Turin, that underwent similar changes in the political and institutional sphere in the decade 1993–2002.

The research carried out shows that certainly Turin had a better performance in terms of urban innovation than Milan and that such a result is associated with a more complex network in which different levels of government, and different types of actors, are represented. Also the “tightness” of the network is higher, thus providing evidence to support the idea that policy innovation is associated with changes in the structure of governance. However, looking in more detail at the evidence collected, it reveals quite clearly that Milan is much more receptive to the proposals coming from civil society (both from the profit and the non-profit sector) while Turin, like other innovative Italian cities, seems much more dependent upon the leadership of the public institutions. This poses an interesting theoretical problem: How much institutional leadership is needed in order to get good governance: more or less? Or, is it possible that in order to make a better assessment of the relationship between innovation, at least urban innovation, and the structure of governance, one should make a distinction between short term, in which more “government” means more innovation, and the long term in which the contrary is true?

Governance:
Is there Fire Under the Smoke?

When presenting the program of the previous European Commission to the European Parliament in February 2000, Romano Prodi identified the promotion of new forms of governance as one of the four strategic objectives of the Commission’s period of office. On 25 July 2001, the European Commission adopted a White Paper on European Governance which was made available to the public on the Internet and has also been widely distributed as a brochure. From that moment on, it has been the subject of debates, seminars, articles and studies. A public consultation was formally launched, running until 31 March 2002, allowing members of the public to submit their comments. Alone, the results of the public consultation settled around the paper produced more than 260 papers – academic, institutional, and individual. An Internet forum is still open on the EU Website, and a bibliography of thousand of articles is available on the World Wide Web and in university library catalogues.

But, what is governance? Definitions abound, and, according to Rhodes (Rhodes 1996), the term “governance” is used in the social sciences with at least six different meanings: minimal state, corporate governance, new public management, good governance, social-cybernetic systems and self-organized networks. More generally, a widely shared definition is that governance is “governing without government”, or more precisely “governing without too many governmental institutions”. The basic idea is that associating the business sector and civil society with the action of political institutions makes innovation easier, implementation smoother, and the solution of collective problems more effective. There are good arguments for saying that, but many definitions currently in use seem to be very vague, theoretically imprecise and too loaded with ideological connotations. Some people see the saving solution in bringing about innovative policies, at least at the local scale. In our study, we derive from the existing literature on social capital and institutional development, the hypotheses that the more diverse the actors involved and the tighter their linkages, the better the innovative performance will be. In order to test these hypotheses, we have investigated two northern Italian cities, Milan and Turin, that underwent similar changes in the political and institutional sphere in the decade 1993–2002.

The research carried out shows that certainly Turin had a better performance in terms of urban innovation than Milan and that such a result is associated with a more complex network in which different levels of government, and different types of actors, are represented. Also the “tightness” of the network is higher, thus providing evidence to support the idea that policy innovation is associated with changes in the structure of governance. However, looking in more detail at the evidence collected, it reveals quite clearly that Milan is much more receptive to the proposals coming from civil society (both from the profit and the non-profit sector) while Turin, like other innovative Italian cities, seems much more dependent upon the leadership of the public institutions. This poses an interesting theoretical problem: How much institutional leadership is needed in order to get good governance: more or less? Or, is it possible that in order to make a better assessment of the relationship between innovation, at least urban innovation, and the structure of governance, one should make a distinction between short term, in which more “government” means more innovation, and the long term in which the contrary is true?

Professor Bruno Dente teaches Public Policy Analysis at the Politecnico of Milan. He is the Scientific Director of the Institute for Social Research in Milan.

Professor Luigi Bobbio teaches Public Policy Analysis at the Faculty of Political Science of Turin University.

Alessandra Spada, PhD in Planning and Local Development, works at the Department of Architecture and Planning of the Politecnico of Milan.
tional factor, in bringing about innovative policies at the European level as well as the local.

Even more ideologically connoted is the theme of “good governance”, which resounds of ethical principles. As presented in the White Paper, “governance” means rules, processes and behaviors that affect the way in which power is exercised at the European level, particularly with regard to openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness and coherence. The positive connotation given to the term “governance” regards it as the opportunity for problem solving through a (good and happy?) cooperation of state, market and society. Take for instance the following quotation:

Urban governance is “the sum of many ways individual citizens and institutions, public and private, plan and manage the common affairs of the city. It is a continuing process through which conflicting or diverse interests may be accommodated and cooperative action can be taken. It includes formal institutions as well as informal arrangements and the social capital of citizen.” (HABITAT 2001)

Not surprisingly, some authors conclude that: “Governance is often referred to as a cross-cutting theme of sustainability – a fourth element that is essential to support the economic, social and ecological components of sustainable development.” (Alexander et al. 2004)

In order to find out if there is fire under the ideological smoke in a more precise – one could say scientific – way, it seems necessary to design a research exercise able to test some well-articulated hypotheses, based upon some analytically sound definitions of the main variables. Starting with the latter, the definition of governance we adopt is certainly a neutral one: “Governance” is a situation in which the solution to collective problems has an important role allotted to non-governmental actors, while “government” is simply another way to define the public institutions. The idea is that the stronger the interaction between the different actors within a political system, the more the “governance” will approximate the ideal of inclusiveness (of social and economic actors) that underpins the current debate on “good governance”. We have, therefore, a continuum in which at one end the political system is solely dominated by the governmental institutions, able to initiate and direct all the policies, and at the other end, the way in which the collective problems are solved has the participation of a diverse and cohesive set of socio-economic actors.

Two points deserve clarification. The first is that, if the current theory is right, not only should the socio-economic actors have an important role, they should also cooperate with each other and with the public institutions. In other words, a situation in which, for instance, business dominates the political system, setting the agenda and imposing its preferred solutions, is certainly not one in which the concept of governance can be used. In contrast, a city in which there is a close cooperation between the local government, the business sector, the citizenry (variously organized) and the non-profit sector embodies the ideal implicit in the current debate. Therefore, the diversity of the actors is something one should be able to measure with a measurement of complexity that should be able to include, for obvious reasons, the multi-level dimension of the network as well.

In the second point, the fact that the actors are different is not enough. For the “governance” situation to occur, there is also a need for the actors network to be “tight”, with this term meaning that the interactions occur not only in the relationship between the governmental institutions and the business sector, the governmental institutions and the voluntary sector and/or the governmental institutions and the scientific community, but also directly between the business sector, the voluntary sector and the scientific community. The “tightness” or “density” of the network is therefore the second variable we should be able to measure. This density is the “relational capital” of the societal actors and it is often identified with the concept of “social capital”.

The hypothesis can be therefore formulated in the following way: The more complex and “dense” the network of actors governing a political system is, i.e., in charge of the different policies in a given period of time, the better. Yes, but the better for doing what?

Many of the positive ideas associated with the current debate on governance are imprecise. Concepts such as “openness”, “transparency”, “coherence” or “accountability” are very difficult to pin down, and in some cases, seem tautological. It is fairly obvious that a situation in which many different actors cooperate among themselves in solving collective problems is more “open”, and possibly more transparent, than a situation in which policymaking occurs in dark, smoky rooms between political brokers.

In order to reach a real understanding of the actual value of the “governance” debate, we need a more precise definition of what including a large set of actors in the policy process can actually bring about. We thought that the concept of “innovation” could provide us with the
dependent variable we need, also because there is a vast literature available on urban and metropolitan innovation.

In other words, if in the “governance” recipe works, one should expect that the level of innovation in a given political system is associated with a more complex and compact network of actors.

Obviously, in order to test this hypothesis, one has to solve a series of difficult analytical problems, namely, how to measure innovation, how to measure complexity and how to measure density.

In the research, whose first results are presented here, we compared four Italian metropolitan areas over the same period of time. To do this, we developed the following operational methods:

- First of all, we have mapped – through extensive use of the existing literature, interviews with well-placed informants and reputation analysis – all the innovations that took place in the selected cities in the decade 1993/2002.
- In order to measure innovation, we built a matrix that has the different possible sectors/policies on one axis and the agenda, product, process or symbolic dimension of innovation on the other. The fuller the cells of the matrix, the more innovative the city.
- Among the innovations selected, we chose a sample of 30 cases in which we reconstructed the actors involved, their roles in the decision-making and implementation processes, and their mutual relationships.
- This made the calculation of the level of complexity possible, measured through the diversity by nature (political, bureaucratic, experts, general or special interest group) or by territorial level (international, national, regional, local, sub-local) of the actors involved in each case.
- In addition, it gave us the density of the network by using the ratio of the actual links between the actors out of the total theoretically possible links.
- Averaging the complexity and the density of the different cases, we have one possible measure of the character of the overall governance structure, which we can further combine in one indicator of “governance”.

As we said earlier, the basic hypothesis is that there is a correlation between the ability to innovate and the complexity and density of the governance structure. In this article, we present a comparison between Milan and Turin, which are similar in many respects, and for which we now have complete information. As we will see, the basic hypothesis receives support from the data, even if there are some peculiar findings worth discussing.

**Milan: the Reluctant Innovations of a Rich City**

At the beginning of the last decade of the millennium, Milan was in a rather paradoxical situation. In the previous 20 years, the industrial heartland of Italy had experienced the closure of all its big factories, accounting for a total loss of 200,000 blue collar jobs, but, this had occurred with surprisingly little social cost. The buoyancy of the Milanese economy was such that an almost seamless passage to the service industry was managed. In that period, for instance, Milan firmly established itself as one of the world capitals of the fashion industry, with all the cosmopolitan glamour that this entailed. But that is only one example. Always the financial capital of the country, where all the major international banks simply had to localize, Milan found the core of its economic well-being in other sectors, both traditional (e.g., publishing, industrial design) or innovative (e.g., the media industry, consultancies). It was becoming a de-specialized, tertiary economy, able to flourish even under the difficult circumstances that Italy was experiencing in that period: the difficulties of the export sector due to the de facto re-evaluation of the Italian currency – which would result in the spectacular financial crisis of 1992.

In these same years, major innovations in the urban policies were taking form, which included, for example:

- Some major infrastructure decisions were taken (the new Malpensa airport, the third underground line, the underground railway link of the city).
- The presence of vast areas of derelict land following the de-industrialization process was used as an opportunity for redefining the boundaries between public and private sectors in urban development. Two very important planning documents, the guidelines for the underground railway link of 1984 (Documento Direttore del Progetto Passante) and the guidelines on abandoned or underutilized areas of 1988 (Documento direttore sulle aree dismesse o sottoutilizzate), defined the way in which the subsequent game would be played.
- The growth of a very vital civil society and voluntary sector changed the way in which the social services, a traditional strong point of the Milanese area, were managed.
The paradox we were referring to at the beginning of this section is that all of this – the economic restructuring and the formulation of innovative policies – took place in the same period that saw a profound involution of the political and institutional system. The two dominant parties, the Christian Democrats and the Socialists, were deeply penetrated by special interest groups and fell into the hands of quite shadowy characters prone to corruption and bickering.

The local bureaucracies, never very strong to start with, were more or less able to maintain a decent standard in the day-to-day operations, but could not counter the decline in the governing of the city.

The result was that, if taking decisions was hard enough, to implement them was all but impossible. The infrastructures we mentioned before were started but went spectacularly over budget and were not completed in even two or three times the expected time. And the re-development projects also mostly stayed on paper.

The extreme contradiction between a vital and efficient economy and society and a political and institutional system in the throes of sclerosis, developed into a full-fledged crisis once the international factors (namely the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Soviet Union) made it possible.

Not surprisingly, the movement started in Milan. In the regional elections of 1990 and the national polls of 1992, a new party, the Lega Lombarda (subsequently renamed Lega Nord) had a spectacular success, getting almost one fifth of the Lombardy vote, with a message imbued with a mix of protest against corruption, a good dose of xenophobia and an attempt to recreate a Northern Italian identity.

When the corruption scandals wiped away the leadership of the Christian Democrat and the Socialist parties, both at the national and the local level, the Lega was able to take over Milan without too much of a contest. This is probably where the history of the city diverged from the national trend. While in Turin, not to mention Venice, Naples, Rome and many other cities, the reaction to the crisis was a mobilization of the civil society, a forced self-reform of the surviving parties and the quest for some charismatic personality able to win the popular vote in the first direct election of the mayor, in Milan, the existence of a “new” political offer, not compromised with the past, was considered sufficient for the renewal of the local politics.

In the second part of its mandate, the Lega made some timid attempts to find support in the civil sector, but by then the scene was dominated by the national dimensions (the centre-right coalition led by Berlusconi who won in 1994 and 2001 against the centre-left coalition led by Prodi who won in 1996) and the window of opportunity opened by the political, economic, judicial and institutional crisis of the early 1990s had already closed. The 1997 and the 2001 mayoral elections saw the triumph of the right-wing coalition, led by an almost unknown entrepreneur, Gabriele Albertini, whose mandate will expire in 2006.

It is against this background that our research took place and that the innovativeness we are trying to measure occurred. Not surprisingly, the picture is not extremely bright. First of all, as far as agenda innovations are concerned, not many new issues or problems emerged in the period under consideration and, when they were, they were not very successful. For instance, as in any other major city, the theme of security and public order was hotly debated, but, apart from some symbolic decision like the one to build a fence around a small park in which drug addicts used to gather, very little was done (and in all honesty, could have been done). More relevant was the decision to tackle the problem of unemployment through an agreement brokered by the municipality between the employers and the trade unions in order to bring about more flexibility in the hiring of new personnel, the so-called Patto per Milano. However, the results were rather modest and the only apparent effect was to generate a conflict between the most important trade union and the municipality. All in all, the most relevant agenda innovation of the period was probably the new refuse collection policy, based on building new incineration plants inside the boundaries of the municipality and the imposition of the separate collection of domestic waste. It is something, but not really a lot. The agenda remained more or less the same and the vision or the mission of the city was not really altered.

The same goes for process innovations. Obviously, Milan had its share of privatizations, public private initiatives, and cooperation between public institutions and the voluntary sector. However, much of this was already in place in the previous period and what happened in the 1990s was not really new. More analytically, one could say that:

• The cooperation between the public and private sectors continued along the paths already well-established, and, the leadership was mainly in the hands of the latter (e.g., in the urban renewal projects or the decision to put broadband access for households and business in place).
• The role of the voluntary sector became even more important than in the past, but the institutions were quite marginal in bringing that about (more about that later).
• The horizontal cooperation between the capital city and the other municipalities of the metropolitan area was almost non-existent, while important processes of cooperation were put in place by the minor municipalities among themselves (mainly through the creation of local development agencies).
• The vertical cooperation between the capital city, the provincial government and the regional government was ridden with conflicts, but again the picture was much brighter where other municipalities were concerned.
• With few exceptions, which were led by the voluntary sector and/or developed outside the central municipality, the “integrated urban projects” approach, able to combine different types of interventions in a given territory, was not experienced in Milan.

However, in contrast, as far as product innovations are concerned, a vast array of realizations could be put on the plus side of the balance sheet. After a period in which the ability to implement decisions was extremely low, the efficiency and effectiveness of the public institutions increased tremendously and in many fields the situation has really improved. The list of product innovations is too long to be inserted here, and ranges from the field of the environment (e.g., the new water purification plants and the revamping of the urban parks), to the cultural infrastructure (one new theatre, three new concert halls, the restoration of the Scala theatre, etc.), the two new “poles” of the Milan Fair, the completion of the underground railway link and new tram lines, the new university campuses, and the re-development of old industrial areas, etc. In order to get these results, a reorganization of the public administration was pushed through and huge financial resources were mobilized, mainly through privatization processes (while the investment from other levels of government was comparatively modest). However, in order to get a fuller picture, one should note that:
• The vast majority of the realizations were the completion of old projects and, in any case, were conceived and put on the agenda in the previous period.
• Very few “new” projects were added to the existing list and these are probably less interesting from an innovative point of view (e.g., the City of Fashion) or whose realization is still quite uncertain (e.g., the new European Library).

• Some of the projects are actually unique in a national or international perspective (e.g., the new investments in the health sector), but were developed virtually without any involvement of the local government.

Finally, as far innovations in the field of communication is concerned, there is very little to register. This is partly due to the fact that the need to alter the external image of the area was not really shared by the most relevant actors, and partly due to the fact that changing the perceptions of the citizens, for example, in the field of personal security and/or social cohesion, was timidly attempted and without much success. This is also due to the already mentioned refusal or impossibility to find some charismatic personality to stand up as mayor, and that the communication style of the governmental leaders was rather subdued, in line with the traditional Milanese ethos and in opposition to the flashy style of the 1980s.

The picture that emerged from our research at this stage is clear enough. Strong in terms of its economy and its rich society, Milan suffered from the lack of a truly strategic leadership throughout the investigated period. The institutional renewal of the last period was used mostly in the direction of improving the efficiency of the administration, and the results of this effort are now apparent. The fact that the present mayor has defined himself as an “apartment building manager”, and a good one at that, is not simply a boutade or a clever way of getting some praise, but represents a precise philosophy very much in tune with the values of his electorate. The emphasis on the delivery phase of urban policy (the ability to respect deadlines and the budget), the refusal of the complexity implicit in the integrated projects and in multi-level governance, the prudent approach to “new” policies and the subdued style of communication are all ingredients of a recipe that has proved itself quite popular, despite differing advice from the intellectual class. One can discuss the correctness of this approach, and the diagnosis on which it is based, but the fact remains that has been pursued quite coherently and, in its own fashion, has been successful.

**Turin: in Search of a New Identity**

The story of Turin is quite different. Turin is a typical industrial city, based on mechanical production, mainly in the car industry, and dominated by a single company (Fiat). In the 1980s, the crisis of this model became appar-
ent, as happened in similar cities around Europe. The process of de-industrialization was slow but continuous. Many plants closed down or were moved elsewhere. Fiat itself chose to move the core of its car production to a newly built plant in southern Italy (in Melfi), thus reducing its presence in Turin. The city appeared to be quite aware of the risks it was facing. The need for “diversification” (i.e., developing other industries and other activities besides cars) was often spelt out in the public debate; as well as the idea of betting on high-technology products (mainly robotics) that were already blooming in the Turin industrial district (the project “Technicity” launched by Fondazione Agnelli in the 1980s). Such a change was not an easy task, though. The city was populated by too many unskilled and under-educated workers, while the entrepreneurial culture was lacking because of the dominance of an organizational culture (Bagnasco 1986). In any case, the transition did not take a dramatic turn. Unemployed workers enjoyed welfare provisions and the development of services succeeded, at least temporarily, to compensate for the losses in the industry.

But, de-industrialization was also perceived as an opportunity for the city. The process was freeing huge industrial areas around the city center that could be exploited for large interventions of urban renewal. The first move in this direction was made in 1982 when Fiat decided to transform its famous Lingotto plant into a public center for many different activities. In the same years, a strategic decision was made to put the railway line that divided the city north to south (Passante ferroviario) underground and to create a new large lane above it. Some years later, in 1986, the elaboration of the new Master Plan (Piano regolatore) was started. The main idea was to concentrate the future development of the city around the underground railway and the river Dora, where most former industrial areas were located. A great longitudinal portion of the city could be thus transformed through the creation of new residential, commercial and directional areas. Moreover, the long debate about the first tube line of Turin was concluded with a decision to build it from the west suburbs to Lingotto, passing through the two railway stations.

While many strategic projects had been conceived, the city government was not in the best condition to implement them. In the mid-1980s, local politics displayed high instability and a low degree of effectiveness. In this aspect, the story of Turin is not far from that of Milan (and is probably similar to other Italian cities). In the previous decade, from 1975 to 1985, Turin had enjoyed a stable city government run by communists and socialists under the direction of the communist mayor Diego Novelli. In the following period, from 1985 to 1992, a contentious coalition among Christian democrats, socialists and other minor parties produced four mayors and, in the end, the council was dissolved and the mayor was replaced by a governmental commissioner until the 1993 election.

The election took place at the turning point of Italian political upheaval. While the inquiry on bribery had less disruptive consequences than in Milan, the traditional political parties were also completely upset. The right wing did not have the time to reorganize, so the two candidates presented for the post of mayor were from the Lega Nord (which was much weaker than in Milan) and the Christian Democrats (it was its last appearance in Turin, as well as in Italy). Neither Berlusconi’s Forza Italia nor the Alleanza Nazionale had yet been constituted. Two candidates were also presented from the left wing; the communists re-proposed the former well-known mayor Diego Novelli. Within the moderate left, a mobilization of civil society took place that involved academics, opinion-makers, entrepreneurs and bankers, and was supported by the Democratici di sinistra (DS – former communists). The process ended up with the candidature of a new man, Valentino Castellani, a professor at the Polytechnic of Turin, quite unknown in the city.

The second ballot was played between the two left-wing candidates, and Castellani won. Thanks to the powers provided by the national law on the direct election of the mayor, Castellani recruited experts coming from the academic and entrepreneurial world, as well as some politicians of the Novelli period, for the city cabinet. He was thus able to communicate an image of good administration and clean hands, which sharply contrasted with the bad image of the previous city governments. Castellani was then re-elected in the following 1997 election with a center-left coalition, but this time with a slight advantage over the candidate of the center-right coalition. The second mandate of Castellani was similar to the first one, except that the role of the parties tended to increase. This tendency was confirmed in the 2001 election that was won by Sergio Chiamparino, a “professional” politician from DS, again with a coalition of center-left.

To sum up, from 1993 the city of Turin was governed by a single coalition of center-left and by two mayors (Castellani and Chiamparino).
Local politics displayed a high level of continuity, even if the role of experts coming from civil society was gradually weakened by the return of the political parties.

The Castellani administration presented itself as a sharp break with the previous city governments. Indeed, one of its main concerns was to complete and implement the projects it had inherited. The construction of the tube line was at last begun (and it will be partially completed in 2006). Part of the Passante Ferroviario project was implemented. The Master Plan, initiated in 1986, was eventually adopted in 1993, and opened new possibilities of development in former industrial areas.

In the same period, many innovations were introduced in different aspects of city life. First, new issues entered the agenda as a response to new challenges. In fact, the main challenge, de-industrialization and risk of decline, was not really new, as it had been perceived during the previous decade, but in the 1990s the responses to it succeeded in opening new paths that were kept unexplored before. The most impressive entry in the city agenda was the successful bid for hosting the 2006 Winter Olympic Games, which will take place partly in the city (the ice competitions) and partly in the Alpine valleys around Turin. This is the result of the endeavor to promote Turin as a tourist city, an issue that would have been inconceivable some years before and that tends to overturn the traditional image of the city. The Olympic experience brought the idea of a possible specialization of the city in attracting and managing mega-events (a list of events after 2006 is already available).

The fear of decline brought the city to bet on a culture with many projects (partly inherited from the past administrations) such as the restoration of the huge baroque Castle of Venaria and the creation of the Museum of Cinema in the most symbolic building of the City (Mole Antonelliana). The need for diversification entailed special activities to attract private investments, to engage in strong city marketing, and to foster innovative activities in the ICT sector.

The issue of metropolitan government, that is, the horizontal cooperation among the municipalities of the metropolitan area entered and left the agenda many times with no definitive arrangement. In some policy areas (water, transportation, culture), the metropolitan cooperation obtained some important results, in others (urban planning, waste disposal) conflicts tended to prevail over cooperation.

Other challenges emerged from problems of security (mainly connected with the growing presence of foreigners in some neighborhoods) and from problems of air pollution and traffic congestion.

The process innovations were at least as impressive as the changes in the agenda:

• Turin was the first Italian city to implement a strategic plan (1998–2000) that was discussed among hundreds of people, both from the public and private sectors, and that produced a shared vision of the future and a set of actions to achieve it. After the adoption of the strategic plan, a special agency (Torino Internazionale) was set up to monitor the implementation process and to induce the actors to conform to the action plan.

• The social problems of the city were tackled through an innovative tool: the Progetto Periferie (Project for the City Peripheries), which promoted integrated policies of urban renewal in the most critical areas of the city, and encouraged the participation of the inhabitants.

• Many agencies were created to deal with specific problems: city marketing, mass transportation in the metropolitan area, water delivery, tourism, Olympic Games, etc.

• The most important museum in the city (Egyptian Museum), while still owned by the state, was transferred to a foundation with private partners, and a similar foundation was created for the management of the civic museums.

• All the municipalities around Turin gathered into different “territorial pacts” and created special agencies for the economic development of the territory involved.

• The municipal firm for electricity and energy was privatized.

• The vertical relations with the regional and provincial governments were quite successful and not too contentious (even if the regional government was run by the center-right) and the city had good access to Brussels.

The process innovations did not entail, up to that point, an equivalent set of product innovations. Many projects are even now still in the implementation phase. Most accomplishments were designed in the previous phase. Turin is likely to experience a deep change in the next decade, but the processes of transformation are obviously slow. The most innovative products concern:

• Urban renewal: some pedestrian areas created, new commercial and residential areas in former industrial spaces.

• Transportation: a tramway line, an underground line (not yet started), the new underground railway (still in construction), and several underground parking garages.
• Culture: the Museum of Cinema, restoration of monuments, and new exhibition spaces.
• University: three new campuses designed, but not yet accomplished.
• Environment: a large network of district heating, but the problem of waste disposal was not solved.
• Sport venues, connected with the Olympic Games.
• Fairs: two important events, a book fair and a “taste fair” (Salone del gusto).

The innovations in the domain of communication were very important. The city made a great effort to overturn its traditional image as an industrial, grey, foggy city where there is nothing to see, to propose a new one based on terms such as: alps, rivers, baroque, Savoy residences, wine, and slow food. The slogan that was adopted for the communication campaign is “Turin is always on the move”, which is exactly the opposite of the traditional dialect dictum that depicts the typical inhabitant of Turin as a “bogia nen” (“one who does not move”).

It is difficult to say whether these innovations will be able to counteract the tendency to industrial decline. The very serious crisis of Fiat that exploded quite abruptly in the last few years shows that the risks have not been overcome yet. But we can surely say that Turin was able to react.

The Structure of the Governance System: the Two Cities Compared

The two short stories narrated above leave very little doubt about the conclusion on the dependent variable of our research. The innovative capacity of Turin in the period following the deep political and economic crisis of the early 1990s was certainly a lot higher than it was in Milan.

The following table summarizes the results of our analysis and the gap is marked as far as the agenda and process dimensions of innovation are concerned, but also in the symbolic dimension, there is an advantage in Turin.

The main reasons for this difference in performance are probably the following:
• The pressure of the problem(s) is in all likelihood the most relevant factor. The crisis of the car industry, and Fiat in particular, forced the city to reinvent itself from its traditional past. One can discuss if Turin was in fact a company town. But when the largest national manufacturer has its headquarters in a city, at the same time owning the largest bank, the most important newspaper and the most successful football club, there is in fact little doubt that it is so.), but what is certain is that the reaction to the problems in the car industry was a powerful one, while in Milan, which experienced a much smoother transition from its industrial past, this was far less necessary.
• The renewal of the political elite. As already pointed out, the direct election of the mayor that took place at the same time in both cities, was in the Turin case the opportunity for the mobilization of the civil society, while in Milan the fact that the mayoral role was taken over by the Lega prevented a true incorporation of the economic and intellectual elites in the city government.

Be that as it may, the center of our research is to find the link between the innovativeness of a city and the structure of its governance network. In particular, we are interested in the complexity of the network, that is, the presence of actors coming from different worlds and different territories, and in its density, that is, the existence of direct links between the actors involved. As already mentioned, our samples of innovative processes in each city were carefully selected in order to make the comparison meaningful and were roughly representative of the actual innovations that took place in the investigated cities, being at the same time similar in the main dimensions (proportion of success stories, proportion of sectoral vs. intersectoral innovations, proportion of different policies taken into consideration, etc.).

The first results strongly supported the existence of a relationship between the level of complexity of the decision-making and implementation processes and the level of innovativeness of the city, as shown in Table 2. Here, the indicator is the proportion of cases in which we found evidence of the different dimensions.

In all the relevant dimensions, the only exception being the cooperation between the public and the voluntary sector (more about this specific point in the next paragraph), the picture is clear enough. Inter-municipal cooperation is not very strong in Turin, but is non-existent in Milan. The multi-level governance dimension is by far stronger in the former than in the latter, and to a lesser degree, this is also true as far as public-private cooperation is concerned.

Our synthetic indicator of complexity (which takes into account the levels of government involved as well as the different nature of the actors) shows that the average process in Turin is about 50% more complex than in Milan and this is strongly correlated with the number of actors we found in relevant roles.

If we now analyze the density, we can proceed in two different ways. The first is to look
at the network of the central municipality, in both cases, the most relevant actor in the innovative processes. The results of this analysis are straightforward enough, as shown in Figures 1 and 2. There we can see that the morphology of the network is quite similar but that its density is higher in Turin (where 31% of all possible linkages were found) than in Milan (where the count stopped at 23%), despite the fact that the number of cases in which the Turin municipality was present were more numerous than in the Milan case.

The second way to look at the density issue is to calculate the average density of the networks of the individual cases and here the results are summarized in Table 3. As was to be expected because of the larger number of actors we found in Turin, the density is correspondingly lower, but once this factor is accounted for, the results are again in line with the basic hypothesis, as demonstrated by the fact that the increase in the density of the networks in Milan is much less than proportional to the decrease in the number of actors.

In any case, even discounting the difference in the number of actors, a combination of the two indicators to produce an abstract indicator of “governance” (obtained by multiplying the complexity indicator for the density indicator) shows a value in Turin that is significantly higher (between 18% and 25% if one uses the median value or the average) than in Milan.

Summing up: the basic hypothesis of our research received support from the data. The level of innovativeness seems to be associated with a more complex and compact governance structure in which actors coming from different levels and different worlds interact among themselves. This is in line with previous findings (Dente et al. 2001) in Venice and the provisional

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agenda new issues and new problems</th>
<th>Product new solutions to old problems</th>
<th>Process new methods for solving old and new problems</th>
<th>Symbolic new forms of communication</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turin</td>
<td>+++</td>
<td>+++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milan</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+++</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Innovative capacity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Horizontal cooperation</th>
<th>Vertical cooperation</th>
<th>Public-private cooperation</th>
<th>Public-voluntary sector cooperation</th>
<th>Complexity indicator – average</th>
<th>Complexity indicator – median value</th>
<th>Number of actors (average)</th>
<th>Number of actors (median value)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turin</td>
<td>16.6 %</td>
<td>70.0 %</td>
<td>53.3 %</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>16.17</td>
<td>12.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milan</td>
<td>0.0 %</td>
<td>46.6 %</td>
<td>36.6 %</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>8.03</td>
<td>8.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Complexity of the governance network.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Density indicator – average</th>
<th>Density indicator – median value</th>
<th>Number of actors – average</th>
<th>Number of actors – median value</th>
<th>Δ %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turin</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>16.17</td>
<td>12.50</td>
<td>+25 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milan</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>8.03</td>
<td>8.50</td>
<td>+13 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Density of the governance network.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Governance indicator – average</th>
<th>Governance indicator – median value</th>
<th>Turin</th>
<th>Milan</th>
<th>Δ %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turin</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Governance indicator.
results coming from the other two cities we investigated as part of this research (Florence and Naples) further strengthen the conclusion.

The picture, as far as this is possible in comparative research, seems clear enough. But is it?

**A Twist in the Tale:**
**the Role of Institutional Leadership**

Looking deeper into the data, one is confronted with an unexpected and partially contradictory discovery. Not all the actors in a policy network have the same importance, therefore, we isolated the roles of the promoter (the actor or actors who put the problem or the solution on the agenda) and the role of the director (the actor, usually only one person, who manages the decisional process, brokering the necessary deals and generally oversees the smooth sailing of the project from the status of being a mere idea to the actual realization).

If we look at Table 4, the results are quite striking. Turin, the innovative city, seems one in which not only the role of direction is firmly in the hands of the local government, and more, in general, of the public sector, but also one in which the largest part of the innovative ideas come from the institutions. In contrast, in Milan a very significant number of innovations were actually pushed forward by the private and mainly the voluntary sector, which were able to play an important role as well in subsequent phases in almost one-fourth of the cases.

In order to understand these figures, one has to remind oneself that, obviously, the role of promoter and/or director can be shared between different actors (this is the reason why the percentages do not add up to 100%), that for the private sector, we considered both private firms and the real estate sector, and that we had a very large definition of the voluntary sector including both the local groups and the financially powerful foundations.

That said, the difference between Milan and Turin is still striking. In the latter metropolitan area, the role of the public sector and the central municipality is largely dominant, while the same is not true in Milan. It is important to note that the private and voluntary sector have a comparable presence in the two cities (namely, we find the voluntary sector in 50% of the Milanese
and 40% of the Turinese cases, and the private companies in 33% of the Milanese and 40% of the Turinese cases). It is their role that is very different and this finding begs for some interpretative hypotheses and poses a more interesting theoretical question: Why is it so?

The first obvious explanation is that the Milanese civil society is richer, in the sense of more diverse and more resourceful than that in Turin. The existing literature provides some support for this thesis (Bagnasco 1986) in so far as it stresses that the overwhelming presence of FIAT actually had the effect of weakening the rest of the economy and, indirectly, civil society at large. However, one has to recall that the mobilization around the first directly elected mayor saw an enlargement of the political elite being drawn from academia, the business sector and civil society, in general, a number of people were able to bring their own networks to the service of the public interest. And, of course, as already noted, the involvement of the economic and societal actors is quite strong and certainly not much weaker than in Milan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TURIN</th>
<th>MILAN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PROMOTERS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private sector</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary sector</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Municipality</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other public sector</td>
<td>56.6%</td>
<td>53.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DIRECTORS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private sector</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary sector</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public sector</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Promoters and directors of innovations.

Figure 2: Governance Network of Turin Municipality.
The answer may be found in the different style of political leadership dominant in the two cases. More inclusive and more proactive in Turin, and more isolated and more “hands off” in Milan. In other words, it is difficult to say if the larger role of the “private promoters” in Milan derived from:

- A more respectful attitude of the political leadership that does not try to steal the scene from civil society.
- The fact that the economic and societal actors share a deep distrust toward the institutions and refuse to let the politicians articulate the demand coming from the society.
- The fact that the two spheres simply ignore each other and live their separate lives.

The point one has to recall is that the complexity of the policy network is actually higher in Turin. This means that the ability to involve a wide range of actors is certainly there. That it is less so in Milan, despite the fact that the economic and societal actors are stronger, points toward the conclusion that the institutional actors were either not interested in, or unable to create larger and integrated networks of governance. This is probably the most persuasive conclusion: there is no structural reason why Milan cannot have a more inclusive and proactive style of governance in which the political leadership is able to cooperate with the other institutional, economic and societal actors in bringing about a more complex and compact governance network able to generate a continuous stream of projects and proposals for solving collective problems and exploiting the available opportunities.

In other words, the real question is: Why Milan is less innovative than Turin, given the fact that the resources are greater? The first answer that comes to mind is that leadership does matter. And, the need for a major change in Turin was so apparent that nobody really complained about the centrality of governmental institutions. In fact, one current diagnosis is that Turin was suffering from a lack – and not an excess – of political leadership in the late 1990s (Pinson, 2002). It is also possible that it is a problem of time scale. In the long run, a larger set of active participants in the life of a city can mean more innovation, more creativity and more robust development, while in the short run the role of strong leadership is a necessary condition. And in any case, in the two cities we investigated there was probably no choice. The lack of strong leadership in Milan was obviously unintended and the need for a major change in Turin was so apparent that nobody really complained about the centrality of governmental institutions. In fact, one current diagnosis is that Turin was suffering from a lack – and not an excess – of political leadership in the late 1990s (Pinson, 2002).

But the basic question remains and will remain in all likelihood for the foreseeable future as a sobering reminder that the “one best way” of solving collective problems does not exist, and that the idea of governance as the magic formula is probably more an ideological stance than a real recipe for success.

**References**


Governance Milieus in Shrinking Post-Socialist City Regions – and their Respective Forms of Creativity

Case Miniatures and Conceptual Propositions

Ulf Matthiesen

Abstract: Creative approaches to governance seem to be particularly context-dependent. Whether a city region is growing, stagnating or shrinking makes a big difference here. In this article, the normative-analytical concept of governance creativity will be tackled from the shrinkage side of city-regional developments in order to make this context dependency of governance approaches a bit more intelligible.

Three case miniatures from East-German industrial cities situated on the German-Polish border serve as the material basis for the argumentation (Forst, Guben-Gubin, Frankfurt/Oder). These case miniatures include sketches of three case-specific approaches to creatively overcoming the heavy shrinkage effects of transformational path-dependencies. On the conceptual side, an analytical tool of governance milieus is introduced in order to adequately focus the factually realized network effects stemming from new governance approaches. We also propose placing special focus on the interrelations between knowledge and creativity. The distinction between “soft” knowledge milieus, “hard” knowledge networks and heterogeneous knowledge cultures is introduced here. “Played together”, these structural layers give rise to three different governance creativity types under shrinkage conditions. This may also throw some light on stagnating and growing city regions and their creative governance options as well.

Introductory Remarks

Post-traditional knowledge societies and their harsh, competitive developmental dynamics produce new simultaneities between growing, stagnating and shrinking regions (see Matthiesen 2004). Certainly, these different region types pose different governance challenges. All of them though are confronted with an increasing separation between growing steering needs on one side and diminishing steering effects on the other. This pushes the challenge to develop creative governance forms even further. And, it impels us to sharpen our research focus on the real effects of different governance forms within different regional contexts and different regional governance milieus.

The proposition here is to have a sharper look at shrinking regions and their governance creativity options in order to gain new insights into creative governance arrangements in general. The main line of argumentation will be based on three case miniatures (Parts 1–3), in which quite unusual governance forms from shrinking post-socialist transformation regions will come out. The final section (Part 4) will sum up with a few general remarks as to the normative-analytical mix in present day creative governance approaches.

The region under scrutiny here belongs to one of the new peripheries, right in the middle of the larger EU-Europe: We will concentrate on the “string of pearls” of former industrial monostructural cities in the eastern part of former East Germany – situated along the Oder and Neisse rivers on the border with Poland (see Figure 1). Some of these cities are genuine twin cities.

We propose to address them as East Fordist urbanizations, because excessive industrial monostructures were combined with complementary settlement structures and large, monotonous housing areas (Komplexe Großwohnungen/large complex settlements). Among the industrial monostructure branches implanted here in the sands of Brandenburg were: fibre textile production (Forst, Guben/Gubin), chip production (Frankfurt/Oder), steelworks (Eisenhüttenstadt), petrochemistry and paper plants (Petrochemisches Kombinat Schwedt). This string of former industrialist cities was founded without any consideration of transaction costs, market contexts or consumer needs. The location was determined by top-down political decisions from the party-governed political and territorial planning system (“Far away from the Class Enemy in the West!”). After 1989, many of these industries collapsed, but some survived
with large amounts of external funding, considerably improved technical and human resource productivity and a drastically reduced work force (steel, paper plants, fibre textile). The sombre city-regional effect of this restructuring is that now all of these cities are shrinking excessively. The main shrinkage dimensions are: jobs and the economic performance of the city-regions and outmigration – with the effect of a near collapse of communal finances within these communities.

In order to avoid a simplified and monochrome representation of East-German regional developments, one has to add quickly; in toto, the landscape of East-German post-socialist urban and regional developments has become increasingly differentiated and heterogeneous:

- There are a few strong islands of economic growth (Jena, the triangle formed by Leipzig, Halle and Dresden, Potsdam and the flourishing “bacon belt” around Berlin (Matthiesen 2002).)
- There are also some stabilized city-regions and regional development centers (Regionale Entwicklungszentren – REZ).
- There are a lot of dramatically shrinking small and medium-sized cities, peripheral regions and city-regions.

Often these three space types co-develop in direct neighborhood to each other – as in the case of Berlin’s metropolitan suburbia. This suburban region, instead of being a closely interconnected and booming suburban “bacon belt”, shows an interesting patchwork of flourishing “bacon pieces”, many stable communities and some shrinking communities. All three development types being situated cheek-to-cheek. As a result, state-led governmental and planning approaches, as well as new governance arrangements, are confronted here with creative scenarios that are quite different from those in growing metropolitan areas like Milan, Hamburg, Paris, London, Munich, etc. In truly shrinking regions, like those on the Oder and Neisse Rivers, shocks and crisis situations used as possible turning points for the better have become everyday phenomena. But in the worst cases, these get routinely integrated and typified in the self-descriptive and disastrous category of “dying cities”!

In clear-cut shrinkage cases, as well as in cases where growth, stagnation and shrinkage are co-present, new structural mixes of change patterns present severe problems of adjustment for truly creative governance processes, especially because the general economic and population tendencies in eastern Germany are again moving towards decline and restructuring.

In a next step, we want to present, in rather non-technical terms, three case miniatures from the shrinking post-socialist city-region along the Oder and Neisse Rivers (Parts 1–3). The intention here is to find out what governance arrangements are generated, what decision modes are applied and which levels of governance creativity have been realized by the respective local governance milieus relying either on internal/endogenous resources, or on exogenous creativity stimuli, or a mixture of both.

**Forst/Lausitz**

Forst may be the worst of our three problematic governance and creativity cases. Situated on the Neisse River and directly on the current German-Polish border, the city was a flourishing center of textile industries for 100 years, known as the “German Manchester”. Since 1989, the textile industry has completely broken down, leaving 40% of the population of working age without jobs. Heavy emigration, especially of the young, the well-educated and women, resulted in a large surplus of elderly people and old networks based on strong ties within the city council and other local institutions. So far, so bad.

In 2004, the head of the Department for Town Planning and Urban Development of the City of Forst, probably in one of the more sarcastic moments of his career, made the proposition to tear down not only the empty prefabricated housing areas (18% empty) but the city as a whole. In a way this marked the end of several futile planning approaches to redirect economic dynamics into the emptied downtown area, to reanimate creative urban activities, actor networks and endogenous development processes oriented to and by civil society.

This lowest point of any city government scenario became the turning and starting point for an exogenous initiative which tried to develop fresh and surprising approaches to governance design. The main actors in this initiative stem from an international research and exhibition project called Shrinking Cities (financed by the Cultural Foundation of the Federal State of Germany 2003–2006). Some of the initiators come from the Bauhaus in Dessau, others are young pioneers and amateurs from the German-Polish border zone. These actors share the goal of getting a truly creative Forst initiative going. They are willing to playfully generate new ideas for the development of old shrinking post-socialist cities without paying too much attention too early to the limiting context conditions,
practical hindrances and possible obstacles. By socializing constructing a possible turning point situation, these actors drafted three alternative development and governance scenarios for troublesome Forst.

- The first scenario extrapolated the dying city project of the Head of the Department for Town Planning and Urban Development and culminated in the idea of completely destroying the city, then building a huge wall around it and letting nature strike back and take over the rusty industrial brownfields, the crumbling entrepreneur villas, etc.

- The second scenario had a more generous goal: The idea here was to present the entire border city as a donation to the Polish side – they were interested in seeing what the more imaginative and creative Poles might do with it and what kinds of informal economy, institution building and coalitions they might invent, making the most of Poland’s new full membership status within the EU and therefore within reach of EU structural funds.

- The small imaginative network of Shrinking Cities developers is clearly in favor of a third scenario. They baptized their third option “special welfare zone” (*Sonderwohlstandszone*). The basic idea here is to totally redirect the considerable amount of federal and EU transfer money and integrate it into a new urban development approach that has four main aspects: (1) to reconstruct the city’s internal institutional and political setting from scratch, which up until now has been spreading the structural funds’ money ineffectively; (2) to strengthen the self-organization capacities of the city via club structures; (3) to build a “legal” community setting that spans the new club networks, similar to the *Sonderwirtschaftszonen* (special economic zones), with low taxes and a lower density of rules and regulations; (4) changing the general status of inhabitants of the city into the status of “freemen” and “freewomen”, hopefully changing citizenship into a sort of club membership that regulates public/private goods much more creatively and effectively.

A special juridical evaluation of this kind of post-socialist “Third Way” is underway, financed as an additional extension of the Shrinking Cities project by the German Federal Cultural Foundation. The main goal of the third scenario is to finally set free the creativity of the remaining local civil society. This creativity push relies heavily on external input in order to make the project eager, able, apt and fit for Forst, and, to develop autonomous steering and governance design for this declining city.

This example of governance creativity under shrinkage conditions presents a network of exogenous competencies trying to stimulate local governance solutions, not bothering too much or too early about practical means/ends restrictions or regulatory and juridical contexts. The reason for this slightly subversive approach to city-regional governance is that the established power relations in the city had fallen apart and were still helplessly in agony. The starting point for this exogenous approach was that local actor networks seemed to be unable to develop “creative solutions” for their massively aggravated structural problem constellation. Against the dominant self-description of “We live in (and in this sense we are) a dying city”, highly motivated external “creative governance design forces” had to come in from the outside, trying to move at least the heads of citizens with a powerful overdose of “good intentions and creative ideas”.

Figure 1: The German-Polish border area – and the three border cities Forst, Guben/Gubin, Frankfurt-Oder/Shibice. (Source: UM/IRS, 2005)
The Twin Cities Guben/Gubin

Our second case miniature, the German-Polish twin cities of Guben/Gubin, will focus more closely on “real” governance arrangements, governance options and governance failures under shrinkage conditions (see Matthiesen 2002). The main findings here can be illustrated with the following diagram:

Intensive case studies in the years 2000–2002 showed three distinct structural layers of intra- and inter-communal networking and governance processes within this border city:

- At the top is a level of strategic networks in politics, economy and city/cross-border planning (Level III).
- The middle has an intermediary level of civil society-based governance forms (Level II).
- At the bottom, a level of social milieus integrating “soft” and “hard” networks into case-specific governance milieus (Level I).

On the German side of this twin city, we found a dramatic clash between Interaction Levels III and I:

- In Level III, between blossoming formal cross-border relations and pretentious government approaches towards the East concerning strategic networks and symbolic politics.
- At Level I, in contrast to this, multiple informal closure processes in the social milieus.

Within the local milieus themselves, locked-in border constructs and low-trust environments were expanding fast. This had far-reaching consequences; even on the level of strategic cross-border networks (Level III), low trust “loops” and irritations were growing. The German mayor and his power lobby network tried to stick to their approach of strengthening Europeanized cross-border politics and “hopeful” discursive strategies. They tried not to get into hostile zero-sum games of cross-border relations focused on history-driven antinomies between “them” (The Poles) and “us” (The East-Germans). Nevertheless, the mayor’s strategic governance choice (communicative strategies and respective trans-border governance styles) became increasingly precarious politically, but did finally influence the formal institutional cross-border capacity building processes on the eve of the East extension of the EU as well.

This resulted in severe governance paradoxes: “good” institution-building processes strengthening creative governance approaches tended to produce ‘bad’ closure effects. These conflicting tendencies between Interaction Levels III and I in Guben were insufficiently mediated through intermediary networks and civil society groups at Level II. All this resulted in growing structural contradictions between individual expectations and the results of collective trans-border governance processes. Not surprisingly, these interaction asymmetries and governance paradoxes tended to reinforce peripheralization processes of the border zone as a whole. In this way, a vicious circle developed, hanging over the borderland territory as a whole, combining economic, political, social and cultural processes into a downward spiral, and diminishing local potential and factual learning processes (individual/collective).

In the second phase of our research, we received a larger German Research Association Fund grant that allowed us to integrate a Polish researcher into our team to analyze and reconstruct case-specific Polish forms of networking, clientele-orientation and governance mixtures. One influential type of such a governance and networking mix is called najomosty. This term designates an interesting combination of close, trust-related personal networks within individual career schemes and formal/informal power elite structures.

With case reconstructions on both sides of the border, we were justified in generating the forecast that, within a relatively short time span, the Polish side of the twin city, Gubin, would clearly outrun the German side, Guben, in economic performance, learning dynamics and creative governance competencies.

Sadly, during the last two years, our rather pessimistic forecast regarding governance structures on the German side has been verified: innovative governance and innovative economic activities expand on the Polish side, while the German side sinks into deep structural, cultural and mental-health problems. As to economic innovation and growth under shrinkage, by now, the Polish side is outrunning the German side, concentrating on new businesses, especially in the service sector: dentists, opticians, hairdressers, dressmakers, and cooks are founding new businesses “over there” – giving the German side an additional “hard time”.

In addition to governance paradoxes, the German side is characterized in the meantime by a dramatic imbalance between a high proportion of unemployment (35%) and a dramatic shortage of competencies in new knowledge-based economic sectors (high, middle and low tech). This imbalance is the result of continuous and heavy brain-drain processes since 1989. (This negatively addresses the crucial theme of the “co-evolution of creativity, governance and knowledge”; see Chapter 4 and Figure 4.)
On the Polish side, urban development, rooted in and contextualized by the neo-liberal “Big Bang” path of Polish transformation (Balcerowicz), impelled young inventive people to start anew in economics, politics, culture and similar realms, sometimes in the border region, and sometimes in other European places and regions. Certainly, the unrestricted access to Objective 1-Area-Structural Funds of the EU is helping to strengthen these tendencies.

To sum up: both parts of this twin city are shrinking, though more moderately on the Polish side. Creativity (both in the realm of the founding of small service-oriented firms and in local governance forms) has moved to the more inventive Polish side. One could easily expect further innovative action here, especially in the fields of services, formal/informal problem solving approaches, etc., where there are not harsh interim labor market regulations preventing Poles from becoming “creative” in other fields of Western Europe, too.

Frankfurt/Oder

During GDR times, Frankfurt/Oder was the home town of one of the biggest semiconductor-plants in the COMECON with 8500 work-places. Erected on the banks of the River Oder, this plant produced (as the witty city folklore had it) “the biggest semiconductors in the world.” (begehbare Halbleiterplatten – semiconductor plates that you can walk on). During the last five years (2000–2004), a grotesque post-socialist investment drama unfolded in this city, with a lot of bad, uncreative governance approaches and an unhappy ending. In one of the biggest East-German investment projects, a multilevel governance coalition tried to finance and erect a 1.5 billion euro semiconductor factory in the Oder Valley (with money from the EU, the Federal State, Brandenburg, Dubai and Intel): a fatal mixture of strong clientele ties, and the notoriously unsuccessful Brandenburgian policy of Grossprojekte (overdimensioned, badly managed and uncontextualized regeneration projects) combined here with dubious high tech technology and economic advantages. The failure of this Grossprojekt left the city region in a shock! Even now, it is still unclear whether this crisis can be used as a turning point for more contextualized governance creativity modes starting from scratch.

I will concentrate my comments on one aspect of local governance milieus, which all too often is overlooked in good-intention-led East-German restructuring politics and within the adapt-

Frankfurt/Oder

Inhabitants (2005): 70,300
Population losses (since 1990 to 2002): 20.6%
Unemployment rate (2005): 19.6%
Trade tax diminishing from 11.5 billion € in 1998 to 6.2 billion € in 2003
Empty flats: 7,500
The long-lasting effects of the network from the GDR phase of industrial monostructures. To make a long story very short: after 1989 the best and most flexible people from the former GDR semiconductor plant went straight to the west, mostly to Bavaria or Baden-Württemberg, some to California, getting lucrative jobs in the flourishing high-tech sectors there (i.e., brain drain at its worst!). The second best and/or not so flexible people then were confronted with two options:

- To participate in the process of institution building in communal and local organizations (city council officer, administration of the re-founded University of Viadrina, etc.). Within the new institutional settings, the strong ties of these “old” local networks resulted in the well-known weakness of strong clientele ties and of closure tendencies against the new exogenous actors, strengthening tendencies of overregulation. Sometimes though, these old, strong ties, originating from socialist industrial monostructures, helped to realize very creative readjustment strategies under new competition-based conditions (see below).
- A few creative individuals remaining in the area were able to adjust themselves through learning processes to the harsh competition situations within the fast-growing and globalized high-tech sectors. They even successfully complied to the dynamizing principle of a dramatically decreasing time of validity of new “knowledge” in their respective fields. Even in this peripheral city-region, a handful of courageous and competent individuals founded a small number of successful start-up firms, accompanied and strengthened by the innovative state-financed Leibniz Institute for Innovations in High Performance Microelectronics (IHP). Being located on the fringe of a larger Europe and not being able to compensate for this location deficiency with higher wages for their research personnel and analysts, the main danger for these innovative and competitive scientific and economic entrepreneurs remains brain drain and international head-hunting – resulting in the danger of additional deficits on the human resources side of this city-region.

As to creative governance arrangements, this second fraction of urban development actors developed interesting person-addressed counter-strategies to overcome brain drain trends. Confronted with the permanent and aggravated danger of human resource losses, this small group of creative start-up entrepreneurs revitalized the old informal GDR networks (see above, option a.) to make peripheral Frankfurt/Oder more “sticky” (to use the beautiful term...
of Ann Markusen, cp. Malecki 2000). For example, they co-opted with a renowned technical-mathematical high-class secondary school in Frankfurt (Gauss Gymnasium). Without any support from the city or the state, they reinvented trainee networks (Praktikumsmodelle) between the Gauss Gymnasium and their high-tech start-ups, selecting the best pupils of each year, and even pre-financing their studies at renowned technical universities in Germany and abroad. In this way, they invented a small creative “Gaussian Universe of Learning and Practice” incorporating local competencies step-by-step into global standards of high-tech knowledge in local/global places. Especially against the dark-tinted background of diminishing options for their shrinking city and its clientele-oriented governance milieu, it is quite impressive to see how they tried to organize “brain staying” and “brain gain” processes here. Actually, they seem to be quite successful in the city of Frankfurt/Oder, which is on the edge of desperation.

In contrast to other top-down stimulated learning-oriented city regional development programs for shrinking cities in East Germany, this case shows some surprising, yet crucial ingredients for successful regeneration governance processes, including a “lucky” constellation between a small number of creative individuals, innovative start-up organizations and the reliance on older trusted but inflexible ties. Instead of strategically planned restructuring and innovation processes, we find here a developmental constellation, which comes closer to the serendipity principle and to a KAIROS situation, addressing and emphasizing the right constellation of time, place and persons. These actors are successfully on the way to constructing new trust-related innovation networks in peripheral city-regions. At the same time, they are re-inventing paths (based on old strong ties) creatively governing a turnaround process of local human resources empowerment strategies. Especially for brain-drain driven city-regions, this seems to be essential. In effect, a self-organized governance milieu is creating a small, but “growingly attractive” sticky knowledge place – even though the surrounding city-region is shrinking dramatically.

**Concluding Remarks**

To sum up the three case miniatures of shrinking post-socialist cities and to add some comments on respective governance milieus: All three cases of East German shrinking cities show relatively weak civil society networks and additional deficiencies on the side of heterogeneous, attractive, “sticky”, urban everyday cultures. Nevertheless, there are many worthy local activities (from ecological NGOs via NIMBY groups to sports clubs and associations) flourishing here. Nevertheless, cultural heterogeneity as a seedbed for creativity or a diversified culture of debate about public subjects, local prospects and realistic alternatives to the presence of shrinkage processes are generally missing. These deficiencies seem to be a belated general consequence of top-down executed state socialism and of long-lasting shrinkage processes, since 1989, hampering endogenous creative breakthrough processes. More specifically speaking:

- **Forst:** This city seems to have reached the dubious status of a “dying city”. Here governance creativity has to come from the outside, in this case through imaginative small networks experimenting with subversive modes of agenda setting and resulting in playful mixes of exogenous/endogenous governance arrangements. Chances to realize these creative governance ideas remain dubious at best.

- **Guben/Gubin:** Here creative impulses for the formation of new governance arrangements have shifted from the German to Polish side of the River Neisse. Hopes are that one day, the Polish people of this twin city will stimulate the German neighborhood milieus too and push them out of their continuous mourning, annoyance and mortification tendencies. These negative competencies have extremely counter-productive structural effects on attempts to “nevertheless” realize creative governance approaches

- **Frankfurt/Oder:** Here we detected an interesting serendipity principle in creative governance: somehow (that is, not via strategic planning, etc.) unlikely and diversified local actor formations are collaborating to solve the most crucial urban-regional problem here: to stop brain drain, to strengthen and regenerate the attractiveness of this place and to organize brain gain and learning processes. In this case, educational, learning and job experience processes initiated early in the process seem to be a successful means to construct a “sticky knowledge place” under shrinkage conditions and to integrate non-innovative strong ties within flexible innovative milieus.

In sum: Under shrinkage conditions, we found three different local governance milieus with three respective forms of creativity. We propose to introduce the concept of “governance milieus” in order to address different forms of fac-
tually realized network structures. These “soft” and “hard” networks do influence civic and public matters in so far as some sort of action coordination between the extreme poles of top-down government forms and bottom-up civil society network dynamics are transformed here into practice.

The concept of “governance milieu” may have two more advantages:

• Against normative and self-ascribed or even self-evaluated governance network structures, the governance milieu approach in a way presupposes critical analysis by externals.
• Governance milieus can be “good” or “bad”, mostly they are both. In this sense, they are hybrids operating in the turmoil of the fuzzy sea of “creativity” discourses and “creative” practice forms – showing case-specific structural contours of new governance arrangements.

The intricate and self-ennobling (f) normativeness of “creative governance” approaches finally suggest a short methodological/epistemological sidestep, impelling us to think anew about methodological “Third Ways”:

• The first way to study governance creativity would be the detached Weberian and Popperian falsificationist hiatus between researcher and object (which in this case is a network of fellow human beings and their social constructions of spatially relevant governance forms).
• The second way is the action research or participatory research style, systematically undermining the distanced and methodologically estranged view of the social scientist researchers on governance and governance-practicing co-actors. Not seldom, this leads to communicative forms of research validation ending in a real mess of circularity – and many good intentions.
• The “Third Way” should integrate a selection of the two just mentioned theory-practice integration norms – in order to link critical research with actor-empowerment in shrinking cities. Reconstructionist and falsificationist research strategies then should be revived here, but within the “social constructionist” and “pragmatist” context of everyday life-research continuities. The goal might be a “critical governance activist” (to slightly modify the proposition of Favet and Cottino 2004).

From this position, we can see more clearly that in all three cases of shrinking East German cities, the same steps of analysis-practice complementarities seem to be needed: without a critical analysis of factual connections (1) no orientation knowledge (Orientierungswissen),

---

**Figure 4:** Levels of interactional dynamics in creative governance contexts - options and conflicts. (Source: UM/IRS, 2005)
and (2) no successful empowerment of local/regional actors seems to be possible.

With this three-step-approach, the otherwise great danger of circularities within moralizing actor-theory approaches, communicative validations and other obscure scientific techniques can be overcome and integrated into the further development of creative governance approaches. Popper’s falsification principle seems indispensable here, in order to avoid self-fulfilling prophecies and self-ennobling creativity judgements. Within the context of tricky shrinking cities dynamics, this seems all the more needed.

One last lesson one might learn anew from the “governance milieu perspective”: The relevance of context, context, context. No more “one size fits all” creativity solutions are in sight. As to context and governance, I have the impression that a hidden premise of most governance approaches is the following: “We can, and we will regulate or even steer the contexts” through communication, through argumentation, through the right infusion of soft skills or the like. The harsh realities of shrinking post-socialist cities point in a different direction (see our serendipity principle above). And this holds true, regardless of what specific design principles of governance arrangements are chosen.

In particular, the new co-evolution forms of growing, stagnating and shrinking regions in Europe make careful reconstructions of the respective developmental logics within different governance milieus crucial. This allows me to sketch out the following:

- Path-specific typologies of creative governance, together with
- Path-specific typologies of actor-constellations which create favorable/unfavorable context conditions for empowering creative governance approaches, summed up by
- Typologies of real games that real actors play within factual governance milieus.
- The strategic improvement of context conditions that might foster creative governance milieus (and their serendipity principle) heavily relies on knowledge transfer between different knowledge milieus, knowledge networks and knowledge cultures. These usually are “finally” integrated into a certain habitus of city-regions, specifying the dominant creativity styles of the respective regions. The following graphic tries to visualize these interrelations between creativity, governance and knowledge—“scapes” and, at the same time, indicate the many conflict lines therein (cp. Matthiesen 2005).

So, for the fuzzy world of shrinking cities, our plea is for the methodological primacy of scrupulous case studies and the methodological operation of structural generalizations. Georg Simmel beautifully phrased this crucial epistemological operation as reconstructing das individuelle Gesetz, that is, reconstructing the individual, case-specific “law” governing complex, hybrid case formations – exempli gratia of creative governance milieus under shrinkage conditions.

Bibliography


Prot. Dr. Ulf Matthiesen
Institut für Regionalentwicklung und Strukturplanung IRS
Flakenstrasse 28–31
D-15537 Erkner
matthiesen@irs-net.de
Planning with all your Senses – Learning to Cooperate on a Regional Scale

Ursula Stein

Abstract: “Planning with all your senses” is an experience as well as advice. This paper is based on the hypothesis that the stimulation of the basic senses and an appeal to beauty and emotions may contribute a great deal to the output and outcome of regional governance. This also helps learning, which is essential in planning in the context of dynamic urban landscapes. Therefore, taking the human senses as well as learning processes into account should be a part of creative governance.

The paper explores two cases of facilitation of regional cooperation in Germany. The region of Bonn/Rhein-Sieg/Ahrweiler has – after the German capital was moved to Berlin in the 1990s – successfully combined the restructuring of the region’s economic basis with the development of new regional planning procedures. The planning and implementation of the first part of the “Regionalpark Saar” was a creative process of cooperation using the “low impact” philosophy developed by the SAUL network (SAUL – Sustainable and Accessible Urban Landscapes, funded by the European Regions Interreg III B Programme).

The first part of the paper recalls some basic facts that have to be taken into account when thinking about planning in the context of governance. In part two, a set of basic rules for facilitation on a regional level will be spelled out, because some characteristics are different from working at the urban level. These basic rules will be illustrated in two case studies; one from the Bonn region and one from the Saarland, which will lead to the conclusions about “planning with all your senses”.

1 Planning in the Context of Governance

Over the last 30 years, planning has undergone several conceptual changes. Communication with key players has always been a part of city planning to a certain extent, as Klaus Selle (2000: 69ff.) points out. But in the pre- and post-war times, this was the job of the city’s chief planning officer. The plan as a product of expert work was the focus. In the seventies, the demand for a more democratic society also had its effects on planning, with advocacy planning and public participation in planning procedures being established (Healey 1997, Selle 2000). After this “communicative turn”, part of the attention turned back towards the institutional changes needed to support the new structures of planning for moving from an authoritative expert role of planning to an interactive model of different groups and stakeholders being part of the planning game (Stein 1995). This can be seen as a necessary part of the change in the predominant notion of the public sector’s role in society; moving from the “modern” conception of the “welfare state”, which has to secure the well-being of every citizen, to the “post-modern” conception of the “enabling state”, creating a framework for the interaction and negotiation between individuals and groups. In this context, planning is again looking at its role and new kinds of plans, especially at visual elements and pictures that may support goal-setting as well as the debate itself.

None of the former elements have been completely dropped. They all remain to varying degrees in today’s planning processes. The new style of planning, which is aware of its need of the knowledge, resources and commitment of various people and institutions, goes along with the post-modern concept of integrating government into governance structures and methods or vice versa. Communicative, interactive and conceptual principles are applied to governance-style planning, which includes informal as well as formal procedures.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) sees a close interrelation of governance with the regional level. It defines governance today as “the organization and administration of regional authorities and...
institutions on the most varied levels as well as the corresponding processes of decision-making, cooperation and the exertion of influence.” (OECD 2001, after Thierstein; Gabi 2004: 34). Thus, planning needs affect process design and facilitation of regional cooperation. Based on a case study from Northern Italy, Fedeli (2004) points to the necessity and importance of process design and facilitation in interrelated planning procedures between various local communities. The example also shows the need for people and institutions to learn how to cooperate on a regional scale.

2 Basic Rules for Facilitation on a Regional Scale

Most principles for the design of communicative planning processes in an urban context also apply to the regional scale. Still, a few topics must be stressed when looking at the regional level. This is mainly due to the fact that a conurbation or city-region, even less than a municipality or the whole array of stakeholders related to urban planning, cannot be regarded as one organization. Public planning always has to create the system it is working together with, and this system has to define its objectives every time it is meeting. Thus, the basic request for setting up a communicative planning process is to design a reliable concept for communication and moderation. The promoters of the process (Fiedler et al. 1998) need to make sure that there is transparency, accessibility and rhythm in the setup. Everybody should know what is going on. The stakeholder needs to be sure of the personal integrity and frankness of the people in charge, so that they can trust in what is going on and know that no relevant parts of the process are hidden from anybody involved. The second main aspect is accessibility. The rules of accessibility define who may bring his ideas, needs and fears to the process and at what time. Since facilitation processes do need the great public debate as well as the creative working atmosphere of a small group, periods of exclusion are inevitable in order to attain commitment and reliable results, such as contracts and agreements. From the very beginning, this should be made clear in order to help people establish their own schedules of participation. The rhythm of the process design is important, because people wish to know how the process will progress. If they miss one of the steps of the process, they may like to have another chance. In addition, if people have made new contacts in the course of the process, they may like to meet these people again (which, of course, is one of the core ideas within governance methods).

Cooperation must provide more real benefits than just a feeling of moral well-being. Hence, process design and the contents of the planning process should support useful partnerships for day-to-day work. Information is a “currency” which is highly esteemed!

A broad base is helpful in various ways. It makes a process less dependent on single persons or institutions, and it helps to bring different points of view into the process, helping to produce solutions that have been thoroughly scrutinized. Building up informal as well as formal networks is essential to extend the base. And, within these networks you have to establish strong ties. Voluntary commitment can be a strong tie, too, if there is a minimum of influential supporters from various fields.

To recognize problems that can actually be solved means to concentrate on things one can really do within the given framework or with a realistic extension of the given timeframe. Very often, planners and politicians try to apply cooperation and communication to problems of a magnitude or kind not suited for this planning method. This may be due to a very positive and enticing starting atmosphere – but from a professional point of view, it is necessary to focus on topics that can bring about results in a reasonable amount of time. Trying to cooperate for the very first time and at the same time trying to solve the biggest problem you ever had creates a perfect opportunity for not achieving what you want.

Cooperation on a regional scale tends to be a rather abstract matter. Moreover, it often seems to contradict interests of the local communities. Fears of losing self-steering capacity or of being outrun by the neighboring communities prevail. Therefore, hands-on experience on a local level is crucial: discuss and develop the ideas and concepts on a regional level, and provide examples on the local level that people can really see, touch, live with and be proud of.

To sum up, all these basic rules contribute to the creation of a “field of energy” (Stein and Trommer 2001: 23). Creating a field of energy means to follow some rules as well as recognizing that this is far more than just rules: building up mutual trust in small steps, sharing success with all persons involved, creating a sense of ownership in everybody taking part, providing opportunities to be proud of. That may mean being proud of one’s beautiful local museum, of locally produced tasty apples or of just being a
part of a big success story. Thus, creating a field of energy also means to integrate pleasure and emotions.

3 The Bonn Region: a Story with Apples

Bonn was the capital of the Federal Republic of Germany after World War II. In 1991, after uniﬁcation with the former German Democratic Republic, the German parliament decided to move the capital to Berlin. At that time, a loss of about 15,000 jobs in government, lobbies, press, the diplomatic corps and supplementary services in the region was predicted. Eighteen communities, to a high degree dependent on government-related business, were considered part of this region. Citizens, as well as the local politicians and businessmen, were afraid of the expected destabilizing effects on the real estate market, the heavily subsidized cultural institutions and business life in general.

Twelve years later, none of these have turned out to be true. Quite the reverse, these 18 communities are part of a region where the number of residents and employed persons has grown remarkably. The number of successful business start-ups exceeds the failures, and the unemployment rate is much lower than the German average. The number of apartments and dwelling units has grown in the region by 18 percent and in Bonn by 12 percent (numbers taken from Trommer 2004: 43). This follows the general settlement pattern in Germany, where smaller communities situated outside the core in city-regions grow more or grow faster in comparison to the core city.

What are the reasons for this surprising development? Looking at the “hard facts”, the development strategy set up by the region has proven successful. The very moment the “Bonn-Berlin decision” was taken in 1991, the 18 communities rapidly joined forces and agreed on constructing a new future based on “five pillars”. Science, technology and research, international cooperation, federal institutions and sustainable spatial development were among the guidelines. The indemnities paid to the former capital, designed to help the region create a new economic base, were directed into flagship projects carefully spread over the region (Aring 2003; Kunzmann 2004). Cooperation was organized on an entirely voluntary basis, with a group of local planning ofﬁcials forming a common planning task force (Regionaler Arbeitskreis Planung, Entwicklung, Verkehr – Regional Working Group for Planning, Development and Transportation).

One of the first steps taken by the region was to investigate the future of the housing market. Both the private sector and the public sector in the region expected it to get into trouble. Using some of the indemniﬁcations, the 18 communities commissioned a study about the future of the housing market. It included an analysis of the housing stock, a prognosis of future needs and consultancy concerning the measures necessary to adapt the region’s housing market to future developments. In fact, this study showed that if all the measures based on the Bonn-Berlin Treaty would succeed, there would be growth in jobs and residents. And it clearly pointed out the need for adapting the housing stock to the requirements of a modern, globalized society.

Eventually, this led to a mental turn-around in the region: from a depressed mood into building new trust in the future. Even if some did not join this movement immediately, others did. New housing was constructed, adding new elements to the formerly family-home dominated market, and was accompanied by a regional discourse on appropriate environmental qualities. New market segments for new groups of residents were developed. The growth prognosis was fulﬁlled in much shorter time than predicted.

These hard facts need to be explained by a look at the so-called soft side of the process. The housing market study was interwoven with a regional discourse designed by an external facilitator in close cooperation with the regional planning task force (Stein 1996). For the ﬁrst time in the region, this discourse included face-to-face contacts as well as a series of public debates, bringing together planning ofﬁcials, politicians, real estate agents, real estate developers, land owner and tenant associations, environmental activists and state-level ofﬁcials. In a later phase, project-centred working groups were established to discuss and enhance the qualities of local projects. A regional award gave a stimulus for new qualities in architecture and housing policies. This brought the subject to the local newspapers and into every family.

At a very early stage, the regional planning task force started joint marketing campaigns which helped to create added value for the participating communities. Illustrating the turn-around of the mood in the region, a common Website was created called “moving-to-bonn”. On this platform, the communities and the active building companies presented their local projects and building opportunities. The region presented its philosophy and cooperation in the context of competitions for sustainable development and of international conferences such
as the world conference on urbanism, Urban 21, in Berlin. Real estate developers doing business all over Germany were overheard telling the story in other regions, describing the Bonn region as a best-practice-model for regional cooperation that also meets the needs of project development.

After seven years of work in the fields of housing and transportation, the region decided they were “capable of tackling hard problems.” It took up the topic of retail shopping and town center development. Twenty-eight communities joined the process, using creative funding: the prize money from the Sustainable Development competition was used together with some funding from the two federal states concerned. Each community wishing to participate had to pay a certain sum of money, based on the number of residents. Integration of private sector and civil society was organized in a similar way to the housing market study. But, new working methods were added too. For the first time, joint sessions of neighboring local councils’ Building and Development Committees were organized to discuss conflicts that resulted from investors’ proposals. In general, the study did very little number crunching, but focused on the development of “regional common-sense” and conflict-clearing procedures. The study was completed in 2003. By now, a major part of the region had discussed the subject and decided to join the regional strategy on a voluntary basis. In early 2005, all but four of the 28 city councils have decided to adhere formally to the regional contract on common principles for cooperative clearing procedures in retail development.

Now, what about the apples? Sigurd Trommer, chief planning officer of Bonn, presented his broad collection of experiences and insights from regional cooperation in one of the last volumes of disP [Trommer 2004]. Core topics are building up mutual trust, open organization and alliances, external moderation, careful staging and the art of setting appropriate goals. In the context of this paper, special attention should be given to yet another aspect. All along the unfolding of the regional cooperation, the persons in charge took care to include not only rational, but also personal and emotional elements into the process.

The meetings of the mayors and working groups as well as the public events are organized in different places all around the region. These are highly valued opportunities for the municipalities to welcome guests from the region and to show their local “treasures” such as venues in old city halls, beautiful museums or the new universities of applied science (the latter are...
part of the flagship projects in the restructuring of the region). Every year during the housing-market study and later in less regular intervals, “regional information and discussion events” were staged, bringing together people from all the groups actively involved or just interested in what is going on. On each of these occasions, subjects of general interest and results of common projects were presented and discussed, often in the presence of representatives from the state level. These public meetings on common issues have become high points of the region. Stakeholders attend even if they are not directly concerned by the subject, because they “want to know what is going on” or “want to meet all the others we have come to know.”

When the first event was planned, the working group reflected on how to add some regional flavor to the meeting. One mayor proposed bringing apples from his home town, renowned for fruit production, and another from a wine producing area offered to bring red wine. On the day of the conference, big baskets filled with apples were placed at every door of the auditorium and everybody was encouraged to eat apples. All day, the air was filled with the delicate scent of the apples. At the end of the conference, the mayors from the Ahr offered red wine from their communities. Thus, participants could continue to discuss and meet in a relaxed atmosphere. These two elements – apples and wine from the region – have since that time become an emblematic element of all the public regional meetings. They clearly appeal to the elementary senses of the people and add a touch of personal well-being.

4 SAUL Saarland: a Story with Performing Arts and Hands-on Experience

The SAUL Project on Sustainable and Accessible Urban Landscapes is a trans-national partnership project partly funded by the European Union’s Interreg-IIIB Program for Northwest Europe. Its main objectives are to recognize and demonstrate the vital role of socially inclusive open spaces in the sustainable development of metropolitan regions and to develop both a trans-national and a regional process of learning, the “learning region” approach [www.saulproject.net].

Under the auspices of the Saarland Ministry for the Environment, the “Regionalpark Saar” was chosen to be the project taking part in SAUL. It was prepared by Planungsgruppe agl in the late 1990s [Hartz 2003; Hartz and Kestermann 2004]. The pilot project “Saarkohlenwald” is concentrating on a forest situated adjacent to the main city of Saarbrücken. The forest is surrounded by seven smaller communities. The forest is open space for the residents of the surrounding cities as well as being a feudal heritage, part of it having been a ducal hunting reserve in the 18th century, and part of the industrial heritage, because ponds and slagheaps from the coal mining era of the 20th century are scattered throughout the forest. The concept for the development of the first regional park project is centered around the idea of wilderness being placed right before the gates of the city. The core of the forest will be taken out of economic use, giving way for new images of the forest and for wilderness experiences. The elements of feudal and industrial heritage are being transformed into parts of the new “spatial
vision", allowing for individual use and interpretation of open space.

The creative core of the partnership organization is called the ‘Initiativgruppe’ (Initiative Group). On a voluntary basis, the mining company and its spin-offs, who were charged with cleaning up and reusing the brownfield areas, are working together with representatives of the city of Saarbrücken, the regional agency of the city region, the regional agency for professional education and Saarforst, the state-owned company operating the state forest, and last, but not least, the Ministry of the Environment. Projects are designed to meet both the needs of the general public and of the different institutions. For example, the former coal mining company has to ensure that the slagheaps will not present a danger to the public. Instead of being planted with shrubs and trees and closed to the public as in many years before, the slagheaps now will keep their bare and strange appearance and will be transformed into places of art, landscape meditation and observation of the development of the region. Thus, the duties of the company are combined with the needs of a concept to enhance the living conditions of the residents in the area, creating assets for new economic development after the end of the mining and steel era in the region.

After having set up the general framework of detail projects to be carried out by the individual partners, a systematic study helped to explore the potential of involving local people in the planning and implementation. Two interesting projects were carried out in summer 2004: “Sternwege im Saarkohlenwald” and “Sieben Räume – Sieben Traume”. In the “Sternwege” (Star Paths) project, an open invitation was sent through newspapers and local associations of all kinds to the residents of one neighboring town at a time. Their task and opportunity was to choose the main path leading from their community to the Neuhaus hunting lodge in the very heart of the forest, which had been transformed into an activity center based on urban

---

**Planning with all one’s senses**

- Ears to listen to all the arguments
- Tongue to find the right words
- Eyes to see the perspectives in the long run
- Nose to smell the right moment for action
- Hands … on!
- Sense of what is possible
- Sense of humor
- Sense of pleasure

---

*Figure 4: Melodies from a slagheap. (Photo: Ursula Stein)*

*Figure 5: Planning with the human senses.*
forest and wilderness concepts. It was necessary to take decisions about the paths, because, according to the wilderness idea chosen for the future of the central part of the forest, the forest management will no longer maintain all the existing paths. Some of them will vanish in the long run, and some will be maintained. By inviting local people to decide which path should be maintained and marking these with a star symbol, opportunities arose to talk about historic events and relics and local customs associated with the forest. In each of the four Star Path actions carried out in 2004, between 40 and 80 persons participated, creating a relationship between traditional milieus such as hiking clubs and Catholic parish choirs and the ideas of the regional park.

“Seven Spaces – Seven Dreams” was the title of another participatory project that brought the stories and ideas of residents from the communities to the urban forest and back again into the communities. Seven wooden boxes built by young people from a professional training center served as a symbolic space for the dreams and ideas. They were first placed in the seven towns around the forest, where volunteers collected stories, ideas and items brought by residents during opening hours. The boxes were then placed in the forest, where activities by local groups continued to attract people and make them think about the forest. The stories and ideas will be collected for a common documentation that can serve as a stock of ideas for future action.

In connection with these activities and with visits from other SAUL partner regions, artists performed a variety of events in the forest and on the slagheaps: Poetry readings, music, and unusual settings such as a flock of goats grazing in the surroundings of one of the wooden boxes, ironically called the “Saarbrücken Refuge” and adorned with a flag from Switzerland. Housewives hosted teatime sessions for their fellow citizens, school teachers brought their classes to paint one of the boxes and have some wilderness experience. All this may have helped make people think about the forest as a part of their personal living space that offered plenty of opportunities.

All these elements illustrate the low impact philosophy used by the initiative group and developed within the SAUL partnership. It means to use small and precise interventions, rather in line with the philosophy of acupuncture than in line with the ideas of complete comprehensive planning. The post-modern landscape has lost the mono-functional and unambiguous character of landscapes of modern times. It now is open to individual interpretation and to multiple uses. It can be experienced individually and ambiguously. Hence, the planning philosophy includes the idea of temporariness, since some of the installations can easily be removed, and it follows the idea of openness.

The elements of the Saarkohlenwald SAUL project also illustrate the cooperative strategy, which tries to involve a maximum of stakeholders, having them bring in their specific needs and resources on different spatial levels. After this effort to “go public” in summer 2004, the mayors of the affected communities backed up the project in public debates for the first time, quoting the positive echoes they had received from the citizens. Cooperation, though, does not emerge from thin air. It needs to be planned, encouraged and learned. Creative activities that relate extraordinary experiences to this process help turn this into a positive feature.

5 Conclusion: Planning with all your Senses

Both case studies draw not only on intellectual properties and efforts, they also creatively use a broader set of factors, including emotions, atmosphere, and new perspectives and experiences that appeal to the human senses. In both cases, planners, facilitators and promoters of the process used their ears to listen to all the arguments. They have used their tongues to find the right words. They have used their eyes to see new regional perspectives in the long run. They needed their noses to smell the right moment for action. And there were projects designed to touch, to get a hands-on experience of what is going on at the regional level.

And beyond these five basic human senses, there are more complex senses that contribute to creative governance-style planning, too. Planners have to have a sense of what is possible. They have to have a sense of humor, because there are still many things which do not work well and which will never work well – and they need a good deal of humor to go through all of this. And everybody involved should be allowed to follow his sense of pleasure, too, because working and facilitating in a regional context should also be fun. It makes sense to use your senses as a creative potential in city-region governance!
Note

This paper was presented for the first time at the Italian-German colloquium “Creativity and Urban Governance in European City Regions” in 2004. The author’s reflection on the subject of this paper is partly funded by the Gottlieb Daimler- and Karl Benz-Foundation in the context of an interdisciplinary research scheme on “Zwischenstadt” (“cities without cities”) called “Amidst the edge” – on the way to qualifying metropolitan landscapes.

Bibliography


Creativity, Culture and Urban Development: Toronto Examined

Simon Miles

Abstract: This paper is driven by the desire to provide public policy makers with: first, a context for the debate on the links between creativity, culture and urban development; and, second, some guidance on the shaping of decisions of consequence for society. To satisfy the first objective, the author elaborates a conceptual model of the process of human and societal development, and then looks briefly at creativity and cities, and the meanings of culture. To satisfy the second objective, the author provides an analysis of the City of Toronto structured around four themes: creativity and governance; creativity, knowledge and information; culture, creative industries and urban development; and creative spaces in urban development. The City’s strengths and shortcomings are assessed, giving the reader a sense of how well Toronto is performing as a setting that is enabling of creativity and fostering a cultural environment that is contributing to an improved quality of life. The author concludes with a caution: in orchestrating the creative tension between outsiders and insiders (which makes for the culture of cities), Toronto has to take care to avoid making commodities of culture and creativity.

1 The Larger Context: A Conceptual Model of the Human and Societal Development Process

The structure of this paper is inspired by a paper presented by Klaus R. Kunzmann in a symposium on Creativity, Culture and Urban Development, held at the Villa Vigoni in October 2002. In that paper, Kunzmann explored four themes: creativity and governance; creativity, knowledge and information; creative industries and urban development; and, creative spaces in urban development. These four themes prove useful in guiding this analysis of Toronto. However, in the same paper, Kunzmann called for more attention to be given to the role of the cultural environment, especially in the urban setting, for human development. Thus, throughout the paper that follows, there is also an attempt to highlight the significance of place for our culture and, in turn, the significance of this linkage for the sustainability of the process of our development as individuals and as members of society. Particular attention is given to that fundamental human need – the need for a sense of identity with place and, at the same time, a sense of diversity and a sense of freedom. Underpinning this analysis is the hypothesis that this sense of connection with place is likely to be more lasting and meaningful if it is rooted in a philosophy that reflects the meaning of our environments for our development. In short, the connection has to enrich our lives, it has to be sustainable, it has to connect us with our past, and it has to respond to our present and our foreseeable future needs. If the connection can satisfy these demands reasonably well, it should enhance the quality of our lives.

With this overriding theme in mind, I should like to start by positioning the cultural environment within what I see as its larger context – the process of human and societal development. I shall then round out my exploration of the context with a brief look at: creativity and cities (in Section 2); and, the meanings of culture (in Section 3).

As a consultant on public policy, dealing with a broad array of issues that bear upon the human condition and the efforts of individuals and groups to improve the quality of their lives, I have found it useful to develop a conceptual model of the process of human and societal development. Note 2 briefly describes the main components of this model and Figure 1 represents the development process in schematic form. The intent is to present the basis for a common understanding of how the development process works and thus how sustainable development program goals and objectives can be realized through appropriate strategic interventions by governments and, possibly, even non-governmental groups, the private sector, and individuals.

What the schema does is to suggest a checklist of strategically important activities that can be undertaken in order to influence choices made by various key actors (especially in the public sector but also in the private and popular sectors) relative to the maintenance and enhancement of conditions in the various developmental environments. It is this that makes for a sustainable process of human and societal de-

This paper was prepared for a symposium on Creativity, Culture and Urban Development, held at the Villa Vigoni, Italy, 28–31 October, 2002. It should be read as of that date.
development – sustainable in terms of continuing human interaction with not just the economic environment but also the social, cultural, and biophysical environments.

Thus the model provides an integrative framework that facilitates the relating of efforts in improving conditions in one environment (say, the cultural) with those efforts aimed at bringing about improvements in other environments. The framework also reinforces the message that many different interests (and values) may be at work when any one decision about any one environment is being made.

The schema is further explained in the form of a response to three questions: what do we mean by development; what makes that development sustainable; and, what constitutes a strategically effective intervention.

1.1 What Do We Mean by Development?

What we should have in mind, when we talk of development, is human and societal development. One should look upon human development as a continuing process that people undergo in relation to their developmental setting. It is a process of continuing enrichment of experience and improvement in the quality of one’s associations and ties (i.e., one’s ligatures) and thus one’s ability, not only to survive but to re-
spond to new situations in spontaneous and creative ways. This enrichment of experience is seen to derive from the continuing interaction with one’s surrounding developmental environments (or components of one’s developmental setting). The opportunities to interact are dependent on the options open. Keeping those options open is central to the public sector’s mandate.

The qualities of the ligatures with people, places and things, which are so central to our sense of cultural identity, also are dependent upon the options open for interaction but at the same time upon an ability to be selective in spending time with those people, places and things that provide greatest satisfaction. Thus the quality of the resultant human development is directly related to the quality of the links or associations that individuals and groups enjoy with those environments and the options those environments create or hold open for them.

In essence, societal development can be seen as human development writ large, with considerable emphasis placed on the strength of the linkages between its members – that is, its social capital. Societal development is the process that a society undergoes in interacting with its developmental environments. This notion of interaction being fundamental to human and societal development is well illustrated by the importance placed on the participation of individuals in societal activities for their development and that of society. Equally, however, just as it applies to most interactions with the social, economic and cultural environments, so it also applies to these interactions with the biophysical environment.

The institutionalization of these interactions generally builds up a society’s social, economic and cultural capital and helps to conserve its biophysical or natural capital. And then there are those interactions that are destructive of these various forms of capital. There is a role for the state in promoting the positive and countering the negative. For example, as a society ages and is more likely to become set in its ways, it is important that the state should be very aware of the understandings and values that it should be promoting to support the positive interactions.

1.2 What Makes this Development Sustainable?

Assuming that the foregoing concept of development is acceptable, one has a clear sense as to the ultimate purpose to be served by any policy of a sectoral nature – that is, to sustain (and, for the disadvantaged, to enhance) the ongoing processes of interaction between people and their developmental environments. Hence the importance of maintaining sound conditions in these environments and of keeping options open for interaction with them, and especially by future generations.

1.3 What is Involved, Strategically, in Keeping these Options Open?

What the foregoing suggests is that, whether one is intending to react to existing conditions or to anticipate and prevent problems arising in the future, one has three strategic thrusts open for modifying behavior and thus current or future conditions in the developmental setting:

- Modify the demands being made on the developmental environment of particular interest (e.g., within the cultural environment, some public parks may experience too much use — something that suggests the provision of additional and varied spaces. Similarly, public meeting spaces in buildings may be in short supply.)
- Modify the options available that arise from the constraints and opportunities of other developmental environments, thus forcing or enticing a change in behavior (e.g., in the cultural environment we find most “cultural strategies.” They may range from economic incentives that encourage private sector investment in cultural capital to the modification of local by-laws that inhibit local creativity in the use of street space and buildings).
- Improve the ability of the individual or group in question to manage or cope with the conditions or forces emanating from the developmental environments, including the environment of particular interest (e.g., with respect to the cultural environment, the ability to cope could be enhanced with the provision of information on, say, opportunities for artists to utilize older buildings or, better, the provision of institutional vehicles that organize the acquisition of old buildings for these purposes).

It is the last of these options that has acquired added significance as the role of the welfare state has shifted from that of providing to enabling. Such a role change gives greater recognition to the fact that the private and popular sector players are also having a significant influence on the condition of the developmental environments and thus the conditions for their own continuing development. Thus if any society is to move to a more sustainable condition, then all players have to be encouraged to recognize and assume their responsibilities.
This implies that, from an early age, people should be encouraged to become more self-reliant through public policy. Policy makers have left this rather late to deal with today's older generation. And to deal with the baby-boomers will require action now. However, to bring this about, and more generally, to exercise all three of the above options, the public sector has to have certain capacities to steer the process of societal development. In many countries these capacities are being weakened by the attempts to reduce levels of public taxation. This reduced ability to provide for collective goods is significant for the continuing evolution of the notion of urban cultures.

2 Creativity and Cities

Why should we be interested in the links between creativity, culture and urban development? As numerous writers have argued, in the knowledge-based economy the competitiveness of societies will depend on their ability to attract and hold the creative, innovative people. To do that they must offer a good quality of life. The distinguishing features that will set societies apart will be the extent to which their cities will be able to offer a stimulating cultural environment and, at the same time, foster the creativity of those same individuals. Note that the emphasis is on the creativity of the individuals. This should not be lost sight of. We can, and we surely will, talk of creative cities. But that is really to identify what those cities must provide to create the enabling developmental setting for creativity on the part of their citizens.

Peter Hall, in his book, Cities in Civilization, attempts to pinpoint what makes for a creative city. In summarizing his findings, Hall observes three types of cities:

• The great, culturally creative cities of the past, such as Athens, Florence, London, Vienna, Paris and Berlin, which were rich cities by their standards. They spent money on art; they attracted talented immigrants, who often provided artists and audience. They were often undergoing radical transformation—in social relationships and values, and in outlook. They were places of tension between established insiders and outsiders challenging the established order.

• Those cities that were technologically innovative in ways that led to new industries—Manchester from 1770 to 1810, Berlin a century later, Detroit in 1900, and Silicon Valley today. These centers of innovation were not, for the most part, the big, established cities, but egalitarian, social places, stressing self-reliance and achievement, and valuing technical skills and risk-taking entrepreneurialism.

• The new hybrid city of the Twentieth Century that is creative culturally and technologically—Hollywood in the 1920s and Memphis in the 1950s. They developed the popular commercial arts (movies and rock music) that could be marketed worldwide through modern technologies. Their entrepreneurs were outsiders.

This hybrid city, Hall believes, is likely to be the successful city of the Twenty-first Century. These cities will derive maximum benefit for their citizens from the complex system of global digital communications. The test of their potential success will be the quality of the services provided in various fields (e.g., the arts, culture and entertainment; the media; education and health; tourism and personal services; management generally, and especially command and control functions; and, high-level financial services and associated business services).

These communications technologies will not reduce but contribute to the need for urban agglomeration, in Hall’s view. As evidence, he cites: (a) the new multi-media electronic industries located in the hearts of New York, San Francisco and London—precisely because they have established artistic centers; and, (b) the fact that face-to-face conferences, etc. are multiplying along with the Internet connections. Hall places a great deal of importance in the face-to-face meetings, and socializing.

All cities will continue to require a range of kinds of creativity in solving everyday problems and new problems associated with a changing world. In enabling this creativity, Hall notes that cities, as formal entities (as expressed through their governments), may not look for a direct commercial return for their enabling efforts. Rather, they tend to seek benefits for the collective interest—for example, reduced resource use, reduced pollution, enhanced social cohesion, and more efficient, often public transportation, and greater cultural understanding. However, as is already evident, such actions by governments can generate new markets—for example, the German concern for environmental protection.

Hall has also observed that ideas spread slowly and proximity is key in this process. He notes the triangle of transport-innovative cities between Strasbourg, Karlsruhe and Zurich, and a similar zone, albeit with an extension east to Vienna, for energy-efficient cities.
In her book The Cultures of Cities, Sharon Zukin elaborates on the meanings of culture. This is summarized at the end of the book (p. 263 ff.). She is writing from an American perspective but maintains that her points also pertain to Europe. In essence, Zukin submits that the meanings of culture are unstable in that she sees culture as a fluid process of forming, expressing and enforcing identities, whether these are identities of individuals, social groups or spatially constructed communities. So, for her, fluidity, change, resistance to control, identity and multiplicity are all component notions. Thus she maintains that culture has no single meaning and, as such, it is neither high art, nor an official set of artifacts, nor a language governing social interactions within or across group boundaries. She likes the idea of culture having many “locations” that, together, make a culture. These “locations” enable one to include the elites and the marginals and the different types of physical spaces, etc. Given this, in the setting of the city, culture becomes a continuing dialogue in which there are many parts. Hence her preference for speaking of the cultures of cities, rather than one unified culture for the city as a whole or even a diversity of exotic subcultures. She argues that it is not multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures that is to be grasped, but rather it is the fluidity, the fusion, and the negotiation.

In short, Zukin sees the process of constructing a culture as a negotiation and the product — culture itself — as a continuing negotiation. She recognizes that this will call for a flexible methodology for research since both the subject of one’s research (i.e., basic cultural categories) and one’s analytic categories are changing.

While this is hard to work with, I think she has a perspective that merits attention. She recognizes the difficulties that she may be causing for her readers and fortunately acknowledges that she wouldn’t throw out a concern with culture as a systematic production of social hierarchies. What she is urging is that we must not only pay greater attention to alternative uses, means and forms of culture (from street cultures to cultural industries), but also to the material inequalities that are at stake in the cultural strategies of economic growth and community revitalization.

Does this suggest that our policy triangle (of creativity, culture, and urban development) should become a policy quadrangle that adds an explicitly social consideration?

4.1 Toronto: Creativity and Governance

There are many actors competing with one another to shape the city and the larger conurbation (known as the Greater Toronto Area — GTA). I shall be referring primarily to the City of Toronto, which, through recent amalgamations of six local governments in what was known as Metropolitan Toronto, has become a city of 2.5 million inhabitants. Although the Metropolitan Toronto level of government disappeared and there is only one city as opposed to six local governments and a Metro-wide government, obtaining consensus on major issues seems to be no easier than before. There are many public/private agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and business groups seeking a voice.

Due to international immigration and national migration the city continues to grow fast both within and even more so beyond its boundaries in the GTA. In essence, Toronto is spreading out over excellent farmland on which it is easy to build. Some 52% of Canada’s best agricultural soils are within 100 miles of downtown Toronto and fast disappearing. The inner city area, to which I shall make more frequent reference, is shown in Figure 4.7

Key features of the Toronto scene with respect to the contribution (or lack thereof) of the governance system to fostering creativity are summarized in point form below. I have commented on most of the key groups of players in order to provide a context for the few initiatives worthy of note, plus an appreciation of what needs addressing.

- The amalgamated city has a weak-Mayor system of government (the Mayor is only one voter on Council). However, the office of the Mayor is one that can be used to advantage for brokering deals among interest groups and for advancing the City’s interests. Some Mayors have been criticized for serving private sector interests, more so than the City as a whole.

The challenges of obtaining consensus on Council are made larger with the much-expanded Council. In addition to the Mayor, there are 44 members serving wards (electoral districts) that are very diverse in their economic, social and ethnic make-up.

- The City is in the process of drafting an Official Plan. To its credit, there appears to have been some shift, during the 3-year process, from the original emphasis on simply accommodating yet more growth, to an approach that purports to put more emphasis on protecting
neighborhoods and confining growth to a limited number of centers and major roads.

In the City’s draft Official Plan\(^8\) (unveiled on 27 May 2002) reference is made to what would be a new initiative—the Great City Campaigns. These are modelled on the successful campaign run by the “Task Force to Bring Back the Don,” which is commented on further in later sections. In essence, the City intends to institutionalize the creation of ad hoc task forces, that can be initiated by outsiders, and that could deal with single issues or individual areas. Examples given include: creating beautiful public spaces; finding alternatives to auto use; greening the city; and, supporting a dynamic downtown that is the business and cultural center of Canada. The emphasis is on partnership to encourage reinvestment in the city’s economic, social, cultural and environmental resources. The City sees its role as identifying needs (though I would expect that outsiders will be doing the proposing), bringing people together to create self-directed, arms-length campaign teams, providing support and assistance in project planning and implementation.

This initiative will be worth watching. My own assessment of the Task Force to Bring Back the Don was that it was successful because it originated with the efforts of committed individuals who were fortunate enough to obtain the whole-hearted support of a truly civic-minded Councillor who happens to be an excellent political operator. In short, we had Hall’s outsiders collaborating with Zukin’s vision framers (see below), working as environmental entrepreneurs, and assisted by an excellent orchestrator of Zukin’s negotiation process.

\* The tax base of the City is largely dependent on the property tax. Not only is it a regressive tax; the City is constrained by the Province of Ontario from increasing the tax rate on business properties. There are other indicators of an anti-city bias in the current (2002) provincial government (e.g., the lack of funding from taxation for the Toronto Transit System) that suggest that the City will be limited by its lack of financial resources in what it can do to pay attention to what Zukin calls “the material inequalities at stake in cultural strategies of economic growth and community revitalization.”

\* The Province of Ontario provides both capital funding and operating grants to support the arts in Toronto. To my mind neither channel is being operated effectively.

With respect to operating grants there was a marked shift in policy in 1997. The shift has seen no increase in total funding (about $44 million p.a. for the entire province). However, prior to 1997, these funds were disbursed, via the Ontario Arts Council, to well-established groups and artists on a long-term basis. There was a focus on Toronto given that about 80% of the province’s artists live there. There was not enough money but at least some artists and institutions could plan a continuing existence.
Figure 3: The New City Hall by Viljo Revell: inspiring architecture, completed in 1965, despite much opposition.
(Photo: Simon Miles)
In 1997 the Ontario Arts Council received only $25 million to disburse in this manner. About the same amount was channelled via a newly-established Trillium Foundation. This Foundation receives about $100 million (for other activities than arts and culture too) from four government-owned casinos. The Foundation is very clearly under the control of the Office of the Premier of the Province. In 1997, the Premier wanted to see: more money going to smaller communities province-wide; more emphasis on community activities other than artistic activities; more emphasis on outreach than on excellence; and, more emphasis on short-term funding to encourage self-reliance via capacity building.10

While the positive objectives are laudable, it has to be questioned why the funding had to be taken away from worthwhile, already underfunded existing groups and individuals. Why not increase the overall funding levels?

The only idea worth exploring from the above is that of setting up lotteries to raise funds; an idea replete with other policy issues!

The Province’s capital funding for the arts and culture is channelled through the Ontario Government Superbuild Fund. This has led to the funding of highly contentious “trophy architecture” buildings or additions (see Section 4.3).

• Provincial control over education funds has also been the subject of much tension in recent years. A province-wide formula for disbursing funds has many weaknesses. After several years of suffering enormous hardship in the schools in the bigger cities in Ontario, the formula is under review. The funding system has been particularly hard on inner-city schools with old buildings and ethnically diverse student bodies. Among other things, the teaching of “home” languages has been cut. Over time, this will reduce the city’s resourcefulness in a globalizing world. Music lessons are being cut. Swimming pools, not recognized for their role in the socialization process, plus their value to the larger community, are being filled in.

• Public-private partnerships have been established in a broad array of fields. Most of the large cultural buildings or their extensions have been financed in this way in recent years. The standard approach is for a government to donate the land and for the private sector to raise most of the funds for the construction (with the biggest donor being allowed to name the building). This has worked for the concert hall, the art gallery, a suburban theater center, and now the opera. The above-mentioned Superbuild Fund has also contributed to several of these buildings.

Such partnerships are also being relied upon to develop large tracts of land. One that is likely to be very contentious is the Toronto Waterfront Regeneration Agency. Its plan was unveiled on 17 October 2002. In this instance, all three levels of government are collaborating with the private sector. The plan calls for $4.3 billion from the public sector and $12 billion from the private sector.11 My sense is that this is too reliant on the private sector and that much of the waterfront — now owned by the public sector bodies — will not remain for public use.

• The most interesting type of partnership is that involving Toronto Artscape. This is discussed in Section 4.3.

• Part of the problem with the public sector support for urban development is that the Government of Canada has downplayed and reduced its role in this field. In the 1970s the federal government established a Ministry of State for Urban Affairs. It was intended to be an experiment in establishing policy ministries that would guide spending by other, line departments. In my view, it was a mistake to make it a policy ministry with no big spending budget and thus political clout at the Cabinet table. It also suffered from the need to keep the peace with Quebec — which objected noisily to the presence of the Federal Government in what was and still is seen as municipal affairs (a provincial area of responsibility). The Ministry lasted four years.

The Federal Government is again under pressure to do more for Canada’s cities and there are signs that it may respond favorably. However, it is unlikely to reestablish a special Department or Ministry for this purpose.

The reality is that many of the problems facing Toronto and other cities should be presented not as city problems but as national problems, the symptoms of which are manifest in the city.

Part of the problem at the federal level is that the House of Commons is not representative of the urban population. Urban constituencies are much more heavily populated (averaging 119,000) than are the rural ones (averaging 86,000).12

• One of Toronto’s strengths is the health of its neighborhoods. They are often dominated by a distinct ethnic group and thus take on a character of their own. This derives not so much from a rebuilding of the basic structure as from the modification of buildings — especially through street signage and encroachment onto the sidewalks on shopping streets — or the painting of buildings and the planting of gar-
Outstanding in this respect are the Italian and Portuguese areas. The immigrant reception areas in the inner city are well-established with their own social and cultural support institutions. There is a strong sense of place.

There is also a pattern of people moving from these areas to secondary concentrations in the suburbs. However, in some instances (as with the Portuguese in Mississauga – on the western edge of Toronto) the support institutions and shops do not follow to the degree that one might expect. In part, this is because the residents of these outer suburbs like to return to the inner city areas to socialize and shop. This suggests that community resources may be far stronger in the inner city reception areas than in the outer suburban areas.

Key players in shaping the city are those whom Sharon Zukin calls the vision framers. These are the people who have the power of vision – the ability to frame a work of art, a street, a building or an image of the city. The aforementioned outsiders who shaped a vision of the Don River valley exemplify what a positive force this can be. While this power can give the city’s political leaders control over cultural institutions and industries, it is often the latter group who exercise it – possibly to the detriment of the general populace. Zukin sees this power to frame things as a form of material power. My sense is that we have seen both good and bad examples of this framing in Toronto. It is a power that needs to be understood if it is to be exercised for the public good.

A final observation on understanding the politics that shape Toronto’s cultural landscape and its economic development relates to the influence of the changing ethnic composition on the identification of a common ground, or common cause. The great campaigns to save single buildings have been few — the most significant was in the 1960s, to save the Old City Hall, when Toronto was far less diverse in its ethnic make-up. Shortly after that there was “Stop Spadina” (an expressway) to save a neighborhood. It was successful not just because the Annex neighborhood was replete with articulate, well-connected academics, but because it was a concern shared by others outside that neighborhood. This could still be expected today, given the strength of neighborhoods. In the 1980s, I was intimately involved in the campaign to save the
St. Lawrence Market. In this case, we were saving a regional institution, plus we mobilized the leadership from all the inner-city ratepayer groups. We were successful in staving off a redevelopment scheme that would have killed the farmers’ market through the disruptions that it would have introduced into people’s shopping habits. We may have to refight this issue because of the intense desire of developers and the City to make maximum use of air rights in central locations, irrespective of what this does to the local skyline, etc. There will likely be a negotiated compromise, because the regional constituency power base is still there to be mobilized – something made easier by the Internet.

The above suggests to me that it may be harder to save individual buildings in future. It also suggests that vision framers who have their own ideas about changing the use or appearance of individual buildings may not meet much opposition unless they are regional institutions. Yet even the major change in architectural form that is to be imposed on the Royal Ontario Museum [ROM] by Daniel Libeskind – in my view, out of place, “trophy” architecture – has not seen much opposition.)

However, where we have seen continuing strength and increasing activity is in campaigns to protect our natural areas – the river valleys in the city, the Niagara Escarpment to the west of the city, and the Oak Ridges Moraine (the aquifer recharge area of glacial till to the north of the city). In a multicultural society it seems that the natural environment makes for a more appealing ground for “common cause” than does the local architecture. The waterfront will be the next battleground. My sense is that the City realizes this. However, as intimated earlier, I also sense that here the business community is calling the shots in framing the vision.

4.2 Toronto: Creativity, Knowledge and Information

As with many other cities, Toronto suffers from secrecy, backstage deals and lack of consultation. Hence I would like to identify some principles for guiding us in the shaping of decisions of consequence for society. First, however, we must distinguish between two different interpretations of knowledge: information and understanding. I would submit that growth in understanding is far more significant for society than is growth in information. What is the key to understanding an issue? There is much evidence that we are losing our local identity because we are not able to strike a proper balance between the local situation and global forces. I submit this is largely because we have not given sufficient effort to understanding the global forces and the local situation in a systematic way.

Thus at a policy-making level, we need to take three broad steps:

• Understand the context. For this, we can benefit from the use of models. Scientists build models when they don’t fully understand an issue or when help is needed in explaining complexity. My Figure 1 is my attempt to model the complex process of human and societal development. It gives me a good checklist of what I need to understand, if I am to understand the context for a debate on a public policy issue. Incidentally, one of the forces that I explore (albeit not marked in the box in the lower, central part of the schema) is the explosion of information and the growth of understanding relative to the issue being examined. (This “developmental setting” can be broken down in different ways depending on what one wants to focus on.)

• Understand one’s ultimate objectives. Hopefully, this is obvious.

• Understand how one is to realize one’s objectives at the policy level.

Then we can shift to the project level to think about the design process that we can pursue. If our interest is to encourage the vernacular in our design process then we should recognize from the outset the importance of natural systems and their influence on the vernacular. It is only with the advance of technologies (especially in the materials used in production and in the technologies of production processes) that societies have lost their connection with the vernacular. Here the work of Michael Hough, one of Canada’s best-known regional designers, is very relevant. In his book, Out of Place, Hough proposes six principles for regional design. I will provide very little elaboration on them. However I think they can serve as a guide to what one needs to understand in order to retain regional or local identity in whatever it is we are designing.

• Knowing the Place. Both in terms of natural and social processes.

• Maintaining a Sense of History. The challenge here is to reuse and reintegrate the old with the new and avoid a museum effect.

• Encouraging Environmental Learning and Direct Experience. Projects can be developed in a way that provides for environmental, historical and cultural interpretation and thus both fosters curiosity and supports the development of environmental literacy.

• Doing as Little as Possible. The design should: capitalize on the site; reflect understanding of
what people actually do and how the natural systems can be made to function; and, provide the structures to enable diversity to flourish.

- Promoting Sustainability. Recognize the principles of energy and nutrient flows that we observe in nature and apply these to the human environment.

- Starting Where It’s Easiest. This also helps to give people a sense that something can be achieved.

Michael Hough lives in Toronto. To my mind, he is a great visionary. He has enriched the local and regional landscape with his work. The campaign to save the Don was something that he and others started well before it became a formal task force of the City. He was also a pioneer in the campaign to protect the Niagara Escarpment – now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. A clear set of principles makes it easier to be a vision framer (as Zukin calls them), to master one’s facts, and to convey one’s message. Another of Hough’s books that may be of interest to the reader is Cities and Natural Process.16

Kunzmann’s paper also raises the issue of the possible trade off between democratic process and the need for speedy decisions. I think most of us want to see a democratic process that allows for the constructive view to be heard. What can be done to speed up the process, and which can be expressed in the form of a principle, is to provide citizens with clear options by providing scenarios of future development trends contrasting the business-as-usual scenario with the trend-bending scenario or scenarios. We are not very good at coming up with trend-bending scenarios in our planning for the Toronto region or for areas within it.

One of the reasons for this shortcoming is that we do not seem prepared to observe another principle – that is, question assumptions. Two examples suffice:

- First, we see no questioning in the public sector of the supposed need to continue to expand the population through immigration. The three cities (Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal) to which 81% of the immigrants go, are under great stress in trying to provide a better quality of life for them and for current residents. These cities have a wonderful mix of people from all parts of the world but, given the nature of today’s economy, there seems to be nothing to be gained by further expanding these settlements – outward or upward. One also has to ask how helpful it is to developing countries, which we profess to want to help in their development, to deny them of their well-trained professionals, educated at considerable expense to their countries.

- Secondly, we see no questioning of the assumption that the automobile will continue to be a polluting vehicle. This is likely to change radically within a decade and with it one can expect an even greater interest in auto use.

In sum, we need a more transparent and democratic approach to public decision-making – something that can be assisted greatly by taking the steps and observing the principles noted above.

4.3 Toronto: Culture, Creative Industries and Urban Development

The public cultural institutions, such as the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM), the Ontario College of Art and Design (OCAD), and the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO), are attempting to assume a mandate for creating urban design. This is what one would expect. All three institutions have announced plans for modifications or additions to their buildings. They have brought in internationally-known architects Daniel Libeskind for the ROM, Will Alsop for OCAD and Frank Gehry for the AGO. But neither the ROM or OCAD, in my view, are presenting designs in keeping with the existing architecture and urban form. They appear to be monuments to the egos of their designers and the CEOs of the institutions involved. I am not alone in this view. Gehry’s design for the AGO is expected in early 2003. Gehry has been saying good things about connecting with the neighborhood – a neighborhood in which he spent some time as a child. However, his design will lead to the destruction of the 1993 practical extension by Barton Myers (a Canadian of international repute). I expect that the new Opera, to be designed by Jack Diamond, a Canadian of international standing, will be more in tune with its surroundings.

At the level of the City of Toronto we have seen no institutional support for creative urban design since Toronto built its (new) City Hall and square in the 1960s. (This was the fourth city hall to be built since 1830.) I understand there was much resistance from the then Council and the business community to having such a large area of downtown real estate left as an open square. It works very well as a public space.

This lack of support is also expressed through a reluctance to protect properties from demolition. Lothian Mews, built some 35 years ago by the private sector, was a charming, intimate public space. It disappeared under the wrecker’s ball within 30 years. The urban development culture accepts the rezoning of land to allow for maximization of profit.
Although the City did bring in leading planners, from such cities as Barcelona, to inspire the process of drafting the new Official Plan, it is hard to see how they have influenced the plan. It is even harder to imagine that they could influence the urban development culture and the development approval process.

One final public sector initiative warrants mention. The Toronto Police Service is rehabilitating a long-abandoned industrial gas plant just east of the central business district (CBD). The 1896 building will be part of a larger complex that, in addition to its modern police cells and administrative offices, will also provide community meeting rooms and landscaped courtyard spaces. The $12 million cost is seen as an investment in community development. It strikes me as a particularly creative way of providing safe public space for use by the city’s more vulnerable citizens (the aged and children) in an area not known for its safety.

Turning to the private sector, I shall comment briefly on the print and television media, private art galleries, and film studios.

There are four major daily newspapers located in Toronto. It could be argued that three of them have had an influence on the renewal of the areas into which they have moved over the last 25 years. I have no position on this. (The fourth, The National Post, is in the suburbs, is relatively young, and appears to have had no obvious effect on its surroundings.) Of the three older papers, The Toronto Star moved south, on Yonge Street, to the waterfront. The Toronto Sun moved east along King Street to the edge of the CBD and The Globe and Mail moved west along King Street to the western edge of the CBD. (Figure 4 shows these streets and the CBD.) Each has been followed by different activities: the Star by a hotel and apartments; the Sun by furniture stores and “loft living” residential conversions of warehouses; and The Globe by restaurants and art galleries and more loft living.

Two major television stations – the public CBC and the private City TV – are also in the western half of the CBD on Front Street (just south of King Street) and on Queen Street respectively. Again, this area is dominated by entertainment businesses – restaurants, bars and art galleries. A third station – CTV – in the suburbs appears to have had little or no effect on its surroundings.

The private art galleries have shifted location as their success in gentrifying areas has driven up rents (or the resale value of their properties). In the 1960s, they were concentrated almost entirely in the Yorkville area just west of the Yonge and Bloor Street intersection. When the east-west subway transit line was constructed along Bloor Street in the 1960s the land values shot up. One private developer controlled much of the Yorkville area development, thus it has been a classic example of an inner city development, with hotel and office tower “anchors” either side of a shopping precinct. So, while some art galleries stayed, most moved to the areas mentioned above.

The art galleries were both winners and losers. They benefited from the initial low rents or low purchase prices. They were inconvenienced by the move. But those who owned property did very well. The landlords did well. The students and the poor, who were the original tenants, had to move on.

In time, much of the two-storey housing in the Yorkville/Bloor Street area became completely rebuilt, whether as three-storey commercial, or office towers, or as condominiums. We now have a condominium glut in Toronto. Persons looking for relatively inexpensive housing win.

Film-making is a big business in Toronto. The city is regarded as the second or third largest center in North America. The Toronto Film Festival is the second largest in the world (after Cannes). The Toronto Star is the third largest center for entertainment in North America – measured by employment. The film studios are concentrated well east of the downtown area (on the eastern edge of Figure 4), near the waterfront, in a depressed area. There are two major proposals for expansions under consideration in late 2002. One proposes the conversion of the coal-fired R.L. Hearn Power House (decommissioned in 1983/84) into a 600,000 square feet superstudio for film-making. The second proposal is for a second superstudio in the same Portlands area. If both were to proceed, along with the planned expansions in Montreal and Vancouver, Canada would suffer from considerable over-capacity in large-scale sound stage facilities. Whether the international investors will find the funds for both developments is thus questionable. Oddly enough, the film studios do not seem to have had a major effect on their surrounding area.

The most interesting of the players among the creative industries is Toronto Artscape Inc., a nonprofit organization launched in 1986 and incorporated in 1992. It had its first funding from the City of Toronto in 1991. Current expenditures are now funded in part by City government grants (15%) and in part from its revenues...
Toronto Artscape seeks out low-rent quarters for artists. The idea was inspired by the US experience that artists, in a minimum critical mass, can attract suburbanites back to the core of the city – into crime-ridden and otherwise unattractive areas. In the US, the artists’ success as a magnet quickly led to their being priced out of their locations. The US Federal Government then gave generous tax incentives to corporations supporting nonprofit housing for artists. The Canadian Federal Government does not offer the same tax incentives but has helped with capital grants. Since 1992, Toronto Artscape has managed to redevelop six properties as homes and studios for artists. These properties, three of which were owned or controlled by the City of Toronto, include property on Toronto Islands, and four buildings in the area from the western edge of the CBD to Parkdale (see Figure 4). Only one of the six was lost after the landlord exercised his right (eight years into a ten year lease) to demolish the building.

One recent initiative for Toronto Artscape (its seventh) was to sign a 20-year lease for 5,574 square meters for about 50 artists studios, small theater companies, art galleries and arts-related retail spaces. This space is in what is known as the Gooderham and Worts (GW) property. This property, 170 years old, is a former distillery, which has been empty for years. It is on the eastern edge of the CBD just north of the railway tracks (see Figure 4). The site has been a favorite location for making films. The property was bought in 2001 by a private developer – Cityscape Development Corp. – that wants to turn it into a tourist attraction, a community for the arts that capitalizes on the heritage buildings and streetscape, and a site for trendy loft living. In addition, a new glass-clad condominium tower will be built on the 5 hectare site. For its part, Toronto Artscape received a capital grant of $ 900,000 from the Federal Government.

Toronto Artscape’s collaboration with Cityscape will be the first time that it has been working directly with a property owner from the outset. The benefit for the developer, who foregoes some potential market value profits, is an assured change in ambience from the outset that acts as a magnet for the sales of residential units. Toronto Artscape wins in that it will see its revenues increase (from the current $ 2.1 million p.a. from its current 5 properties) and thus give it more opportunity to help more artists. The artists also win. And there are 300 names on the waiting list for studio and office space and 500 on the list for a place to live and work.

Given the booming market in loft conversions, and the pressure on artists to move out of the downtown area, Toronto Artscape is having to look for niche opportunities and to move fast. With its most recent opportunity, it was seen by some in the neighborhood as moving too fast. This property, known as the Wychwood Barns, is...
a group of 5 streetcar repair barns built between 1913 and 1921. They are located far from the CBD, north of the Annex, just west of Bathurst Street (see Figure 4). In solid brick, they range from 60 to 99 meters in length and 11 to 13 meters in width. Attached to the barns are two hectares of open land. The Toronto Transit Commission abandoned the property in 1978 and deeded it back to the City in 1999. Toronto Artscape has completed a feasibility study on how to make best use of the buildings. The City has just approved the vision statement. Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, and doubtless as an attempt to appease the vociferous few, the City has chosen to remove one of the barns to add to the existing two hectares of open space, which will become a public park. Toronto Artscape plans to put in a bid, in partnership with other nonprofit organizations, to redevelop the remaining four barns.

Are there lessons for others in Toronto Artscape’s experiences to date? It seems that each opportunity they have been presented with has required an approach tailored to the particular circumstances. There are advantages and disadvantages associated with both public and private sector partnerships. Both, as partners, may provide the property. But both, as partners, may put many conditions on the development and thus reduce the scope for Toronto Artscape’s creativity and even the opportunity to retain the integrity of, and thus connectedness with, a place. The public sector’s conditions may be rooted in the desire to play according to the rules, the private sector’s conditions may stem from the desire to make a healthy profit. Ideally, the public sector should create an enabling environment that would make it feasible for Toronto Artscape to own its buildings. A similar organization in Minneapolis, called Artspace Projects, is able to do just that, because of the enabling tax environment provided by the US Federal Government.

4.4 Toronto: Creative Spaces in Urban Development

Should we regard the entire urban area as a flexible, creative space? Conceptually, thinking of the urban area as an entity and over a long period of time, I think we should. Indeed, given the ease with which rezoning has been permitted in Toronto, my sense is that is what we have already. Whether one could acknowledge this in an Official Plan is questionable. In the latest draft Official Plan it is clear that the City planners received a clear message that citizens want stable neighborhoods. This desire is legitimate and must be acknowledged in any conceptualization of the entire urban area as a flexible, creative space. However, another part of that same reality is that neighborhoods do change. In Section 3 reference was made to such change as an expression of the culture of the ethnic community that may have a dominant presence in an area.

In 1996, the City of Toronto institutionalized the idea of experimental space in two “investment areas” on the eastern and western fringes of the CBD. The draft Official Plan suggests that more may be created. The two pilot areas have been publicized, by the City and by develop-
opers, as a success. There is some basis for this position. In the western area, around King and Spadina, the warehouses and industrial buildings associated with a declining garment industry were not being rezoned by the City because it wanted to protect the inner-city employment for the relatively low-wage workers in this area. This is a laudable social objective. However, with the relaxation of zoning controls – especially of use and density (but with built-form controls to ensure that new buildings would conform to existing buildings) – the area changed radically. Some of the new occupants were creative industries (e.g., Paramount and art galleries). But the most dramatic change was in the number of condominiums. They brought new life to the area.

However, in hindsight, this accommodation of market forces has meant the abandonment of the social justice objectives of city planning. The condominiums are not affordable for lower income groups. Indeed, there is no provision for such housing in the western part of the downtown area. This suggests that future experiments should take on more of a challenge.

There is plenty of scope for creative development in the Toronto region. Large tracts of land have been made available in recent years. Some of these have already been built upon and, unfortunately, these represent wasted opportunities. One racetrack in an eastern inner suburb, near the waterfront, became conventional housing. A similar future has been designated for an old airforce base on the north-west edge of the city. It is not that ideas have not been put forward. I recall in the 1970s that York University had proposed that this base (Downsview) should be used as an incubator site for small enterprises (rather like the space provided by the Memo Foundation in the Netherlands). This idea never took off.

There is a large tract of land held by the Provincial Government to the north-east of Toronto that was to have been used for an experimental settlement (Seaton). Some of this land was used recently for a complicated land swap, orchestrated by the Provincial Government, to get developers to forego some of the potential development opportunities on lands they owned on the environmentally sensitive Oak Ridges Moraine (the aquifer recharge area north of the city). While this could be regarded as a creative swap in the context of the free-wheeling business environment of Canada, one has to ask why the land speculators could not have been told that they were not going to be able to build on the moraine.

The waterfront is the big space that everyone is watching now. It is impossible to say what will happen with this land. What I would like to see is a truly creative push by the partnership of the three levels of government to demonstrate: how wildlife can be accommodated in the city; how opportunities to commune with nature can be

Figure 7: The Roy Thomson Hall by Arthur Erickson: a concert hall erected with private money on public land.
(Photo: Simon Miles)
provided in the city; and, how new buildings can be designed with nature in mind to greatly reduce the use of conventional, polluting sources of energy. All three objectives, I believe, would respond to a common cause of a multicultural society – its members’ attachment to the natural environment. This is an important consideration in a country seeking opportunities to achieve socio-cultural cohesion. The last objective would also fit very well with the Federal Government’s strategic approach to meeting the Kyoto Protocol targets. Judging by the first public consultations on the new plan, some of the visionary elements are in place. Others are missing (e.g., the lack of reference to the contentious airport in the area). There has been excellent creative work done on what is needed both at the scale of the city and of the individual building. As ever, what is needed is political will.

Some of the successes in using spaces creatively have been mentioned already – notably the Toronto Artscape initiatives and the several references to the work to restore the Don River ecosystem. One particularly creative element in the Don Valley restoration is the reuse of an old brickworks site (and its abandoned buildings) for an environmental learning center. (However, the buildings are now in need of substantial investment if they are not to collapse.) Another component involves the restoration of the original mouth of the Don River as it discharges into Lake Ontario. This project is about to be undertaken. In time, we should see the recreation of a delta and marshland on the waterfront.

Slightly to the east of the Don is another remarkable experiment – that of the Leslie Street Spit that projects four kilometers into Lake Ontario. This has been created entirely from material derived from the demolition of old buildings and the excavation of sites for underground parking. Originally, the spit was to become the basis for an outer commercial harbor. Instead it has become a significant wildlife sanctuary combined with harbors for recreational boating.

To end on a truly positive note, one remarkably creative space that has appeared on our waterfront is a park – the Music Garden – that has been designed by cellist Yo-Yo Ma and others. Its spaces are supposed to enable one to relate musical experience to spatial design as one moves through the park.

5 Conclusion

My overall impression from this summary exploration of Toronto’s efforts to maximize the quality of its cultural environment for the benefit of the human and societal development of its citizenry is that it has performed poorly. In its defense, it can be said that Canada is a young country; there is still something of a frontier mentality that translates into regarding self-serving maximization of profit as being in the public interest. Unfortunately, that mentality has led to the destruction of much of the built heritage and the ignoring of the opportunities to make the most of many potentially creative spaces.

It is also hypothesized that it may be difficult, in such a richly multicultural society, to find a common ground on which to build consensus for saving the built heritage. However, it is noted that the natural environment may be a more fertile ground for cultivating such a consensus.

Having said that, perhaps the answer to successful advance on both fronts lies with the mobilization of the energies and the vision framing of the outsiders whom Hall has noted as being so instrumental in the past building of creative cities capable of responding to new challenges. The constant tension that arises from the negotiation between the outsiders and the established insiders has to be facilitated: it is – as Zukin observes – what makes for the cultures of cities.

However, facilitating that creative interplay will be a challenge for Toronto’s institutions. Particularly difficult, given the above-mentioned mentality, will be to avoid making commodities of culture and creativity. There are signs that we could head in this direction. The ideas of people like Richard Florida are attracting attention. Of itself, this is very good. Florida, author of The Rise of the Creative Class, has recognized, as Hall has, that creative people have to be attracted to the city and that, to hold them, one has to create the habitats they like. The risk is that Toronto’s institutions will encourage the use of, say, artists as “bait” and value them not for their work, and its contribution to enriching the cultural environment, but only for the number of creative people, in other walks of life, whom they serve to attract. The distinction is a subtle one, but real. There is nothing wrong with making the argument for more support for cultural activities because they also happen to draw other creative people to the city. It would be a great shame, however, if that is the only ground on which such increased support were to be justified.
The intent of any choice made is to improve the quality of the judgments made and the degree of realism in the expectations. Thus, in exercising the choice, there may well be adverse effects on one or more of the developmental environments (such as the biophysical environment) and, to the extent that this is obvious to the individual or group in question, there may be some dissatisfaction registered.

This would affect the quality of life enjoyed. Indeed, this is exactly what has happened with the demands made on the biophysical environment as a resources base. Aware people feel that the quality of life has been adversely affected because of the qualitative and quantitative losses they have observed. Similarly, the destruction of heritage buildings and spaces gives rise to a sense of loss. Both types of losses lead to a degraded cultural environment.

This information on the actual response of the developmental environments and the ways they are changing often takes time to be registered and contribute to our sense of our quality of life. This registering of our quality of life is shown on the right, lower corner of the schema. This register is important because it incorporates values (in the context of demands). For example, those who are concerned about sustainability register their perceptions about sustainability here. Feedback about the degree of satisfaction with life may result in new priorities accorded to certain needs. This feedback loop is shown on the right side. This is to be distinguished from the more specific information on the actual condition of the developmental environments and the constraints and opportunities open, which will become part of the feedback shown on the left side of the schema.

This more specific feedback is of two types:

• First, there is the feedback based on an awareness of adjustments in options that are available. This feedback begins to affect both the priorities accorded to needs (e.g., just as one can expect that, with soil erosion continuing, the message is eventually received that basic survival may be at stake, so one can also expect that the continuing destruction of urban spaces, landmarks, and facilities – most likely justified in the name of economic efficiency – will lead to the realization that one’s cultural heritage is at stake) and the values (e.g., regarding attitudes to the biophysical environment and to time-use).

• There is also feedback on what is happening in the world around us – whether we are talking only of our neighbors or of the world at large. This information will also affect our values and thus our preferences for the way in which we satisfy our needs, but it will not affect the priorities we accord our needs, as such, until it has worked its way through our value system.

What the schema does is to offer us a checklist of strategically important activities that can be
undertaken in order to influence choices made by various key actors relative to the maintenance and enhancement of conditions in the various developmental environments.


7 This map was made available by Carolyn Whitzman, who had prepared it for a paper “Renovating houses and history in Parkdale Toronto” given to the GTA Forum, 9 October 2002. The map is based on Map 9 (p. 181), in J.M.S. Careless, Toronto to 1918 (Toronto: Lorimer, 1984) and R. Harris and M. Luymes, “The Growth of Toronto 1861-1941: a cartographic essay,” Urban History Review 18(3), 1990, 244–255.

8 City of Toronto, Urban Development Services, Toronto Official Plan Summary (draft plan), (Toronto: City of Toronto), p. 14.

9 Sharon Zukin, op. cit., p. 290.


12 Ibid.


14 Sharon Zukin, op. cit., p. 291.


18 Ibid.


21 E. Relph, op. cit., p. 117.

22 For example, M. Hough: Cities and Natural Process, op. cit.


Simon Miles
63 Hampton Avenue
Toronto, M4K 2Y6
Canada
simon-miles@sympatico.ca