Strategic planning and institutional change: A karst river phenomenon

CHAPTER 20

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The chapter focuses on the (potential) institutional changes introduced by strategic spatial planning (SSP) episodes, and on the procedural and institutional aspects that occur in different planning systems. The contribution of the chapter lies in the explication of four key categories through which changes in 'institutional frames' can be understood and explored: technical, cognitive, discursive and socio-economic. These are presented as a means of exploring a metaphor of innovation being similar to the passage of water through Karst areas. The capacity to shape innovation is then analysed using the lens of cultural political economy and the strategic-relational approach to explore how coalitions of actors may induce various forms of transformation.

Keywords:

Strategic spatial planning, karst area, imaginary, discourse, cognitive, innovation

Introduction

The chapter focuses on the (potential) institutional changes introduced by strategic spatial planning (SSP) episodes and different forms of innovation and effectiveness in planning. It reflects on the procedural and institutional dynamics that occur in different planning systems on the long run, while this book offers a great opportunity to overview episodes and practices of SSP in different world-wide contexts (see chapters in Part 1). As Friedmann stated, "All planning must confront the meta-theoretical problem of how to make technical knowledge in planning effective in informing public actions" (1987, p.36). In this perspective, the debate about planning systems and planning theory encompasses an umbrella of different theoretical reflections that have conceptualized ways to achieve effectiveness (intended in its broader meaning) in a constantly changing environment (Hillier, 2011). Within this domain, SSP became one of the most powerful answers to the request for effectiveness of planning processes.

SSP and its specific normative body (Newman, 2008) encompasses capacities of prompting structural innovation (Albrechts, 2006; 2010a), offering a strong ethical stance (Albrechts, 2013; Moulaert, 2010b), and depicting governance arrangements to combine flexibility and effectiveness (Friedmann, 2004; Healey, 2006a, b). In a way, it is a product of a 'culture of performative planning' (Janin Rivolin, 2010) associate to the aim of pursuing collective interests.

Nevertheless, there is disaffection toward these long-term normative stances, in particular concerning their evolution in practice, and some further reflections could be made about the breaking through capacity of SSP approach(es) to provoke changes in planning culture. Provocatively, it would possible to question the extent to which SSP has managed to provoke a shift in mainstream practices, or whether its coexistence with traditional planning is a latent struggle embedded in every context. At the same time,

the ethical dimension and the power of innovation that some authors advocate in the SSP approach seems to lose momentum when SSP gets mainstreamed, unless, for example, the threat of being a vehicle for neo-liberal interests (taking for granted for the context of this paper that neo-liberalism as such is unethical) is the tribute required to be paid in order to achieve effectiveness and result-oriented planning practices.

Hence, the procedural and institutional dynamics that are induced by SSP practices and the capacity of normative stances to generate long-term changes and innovation in different contexts are worth investigation. At the same time, however, the complexity of addressing this interest requires a different perspective in the analysis. So far, most of the time SSP initiatives and its innovation capacity are circumscribed to specific episodes with a starting frame, an independent development, and a conclusion due to a series of specific circumstances. Later in time and in space, other initiatives might take place partially building on existing knowledge, partially due to key actors that are carrying certain technical expertise, or due to specific socio-economic issues that generate a new quest of effectiveness and prompt specific forms of SSP.

Therefore, the observation of SSP practices seems to depict a phenomenon that looks somehow similar to the one of water in karst areas. A karst area, due to the specific porosity of the soil and rock (such as limestone, dolomite and gypsum), is characterised by sinkholes in which water is collected and disappears underground, and springs out of which water comes back to the surface. At the same time, streams of water can disappear underground and reappear miles away a number of times, often with different names (e.g. the river Ljubljanica in Slovenia, known as the river of seven names). If this phenomenon is not seen in a wider scale, it would look like an heterogeneous system of different streams of water that come out and die due to some

irrational logic, and not as a continuity of flows which alternately passage under-ground and above-ground.

This karst metaphor allows a reflection on the dynamics that prompt SSP episodes and the capacity to generate changes in planning culture, or on the contrary, to let episodes disappear in sinkholes. Even if not completely matching the dynamics at stake, it is useful to introduce a different conceptual way of reading SSP and its innovative practices in planning, and their consequences.

For this purpose, SSP, including its normative apparatus, is proposed in this chapter as a cultural/technical imaginary. At the same time, an institutionalist perspective allows consideration of planning systems as socially constructed (Servillo and v.d. Broeck, 2015), based on an hegemonic socio-cultural and technical imaginary supported and replicated by actors in their practices. Hence, the technical and procedural knowledge (using Friedmann's expression in the above quote) of SSP imaginaries is confronted in its capacity to interact and modify hegemonic imaginaries in planning systems (practices and governance processes). In order to conceive how SSP encounters interact with institutional contexts and produce change in the long run, a conceptual model is proposed to read these dynamics as generated by confrontation of different socio-technical imaginaries that determine the under-ground or the above-ground of streams of knowledge and practices.

The challenge for this chapter is to reflect on the position of SSP as driver for innovation in technique(s), discourse(s), and as cognitive dimension(s) of local planning styles, hence generating micro-attempts of applying specific knowledge and recommendations to daily practices, intertwining with what would be called "traditional" planning practices. The assumption is that SSP generates dynamics that affect not only the mere technical dimension of SSP (the planning tools) but also a

wider socio-institutional imaginary, in relation to the discourses mobilised and the cognitive aspects in support of them. For this, the actors involved are crucial because they are the agents that determine continuity and rupture in the process of evolution of the planning systems.

SSP as a normative socio-technical imaginary seeking innovation

Since the 1990s, strategic approaches to spatial planning are discussed in theory and in practice, reflecting on its innovative characters. It has been described (and circumscribed) as a "public-sector led socio-spatial process through which a vision, actions, and means for implementation are produced that shape and frame what a place is and may become" (Albrechts 2004, p.747). This quote, a part of the technical dimension of SSP (vision, actions, means), emphasises the procedural dimension and the public realm addressing space as policy domain, which gets distinguished from other types of strategic planning, e.g. in private market, in advertisement, etc. Moreover, at least two differences can be highlighted in literature about SSP's normative approach in relation to traditional spatial planning: a limited rationality instead of a comprehensive approach, and also the search for transformative practices with new forms of governance and wider arena of actors (Healey, 2009) instead of relying (only) on technical expertise and narrower decision-making processes.

First, SSP approaches acknowledge the "bounded rationality" in decision-making processes and the limited power of planners in times of rising complexity and uncertainty (Innes and Booher, 2010; Hillier, 2011). SSP is selective, focusing on specific spatial issues and procedural ways in order to tackle wicked problems. Second, SSP insists on the procedural dimension in planning practices, in which the necessity of being as inclusive as possible is advocated. The involvement of actors from the public-

sector as well as actors belonging to the economic and civil society sectors allows processes to go beyond simple collaborative approaches and to aim at structural changes through social innovative practices (Moulaert et al., 2013) and co-production of space (Albrechts, 2013).

This normative dimension constitutes an innovative imaginary that acts as a reference for a community of experts, scholars, actors involved in field activities. It is a sort of system of values that embeds all the innovative stances represented by the SSP approach, which is confronted in each planning context. In each planning context, the role of 'transformative practices', enabled by SSP imaginary and related practices, becomes relevant. Such practices are meant to "refuse to accept that the current way of doing things is necessarily the best way; they break free from concepts, structures and ideas that only persist because of the process of continuity" (Albrechts 2010b, p.1117). SSP, therefore, aims at introducing new governance arrangements which help to take "decision makers, planners, institutions, and citizens out of their comfort zones and compels them to confront their key beliefs, to challenge conventional wisdom, and to examine the prospects of 'breaking out of the box'" (Albrechts 2010b, p.1115).

Innovation is here intended as a capacity to change routinized ways of doing, using new practices for "thinking out of the box". It is a struggle between different cultural imaginaries. The interruption of traditional processes of continuity through practices and innovative ideas leads to innovative ways of doing. These transformative capacities are embedded in governance strategic planning episodes, which address contemporary and contextualised socio-spatial challenges (Walsh and Allin, 2012). They are based on rationalities that have the power to break through a system of well-established practices that constitute hegemonic imaginaries. At the same time, different value, strategic, communicative and instrumental rationalities are mobilised in SSP

practices (Albrechts, 2004), together with new ways of conceiving space. Part 1 of this volume widely indicates how this process has taken place in different contexts.

The elements that characterize the SSP repertoire are conceived as forms of innovation that can be identified in the wider domain of planning practices and cultures. As such, they are not *a priori* better than others. They are attempts to implement planning initiatives making them more effective. They can be found in various plans and programmes, which may vary from regional or metropolitan governance plans (Balducci et al., 2011; Healey, 2006b) to local development initiatives (Moulaert et al., 2010). In this volume, Maginn et al's discussion of Australian cases, Esho and Obudho's discussion of African cases, Demazière and Serrano on France, Fedeli on Italy and Abbott on Vancouver bring a world-wide overview of forms of innovation. Building a SSP normative imaginary, international literature - as well as the cases in this volume - highlight as a main innovation, a more or less pronounced capacity to define a new and shared vision that is able to coordinate different actions addressing contemporary spatial dynamics through inter-sectorial and inter-scalar actions (Wilson and Piper 2010); the overcoming of silos-mentality and bounded-territory traps (Stead and Meijers, 2009); and the achievement of social innovative processes based on the search for mutual consensus among different interests with inclusive decision making processes (Albrechts, 2004; 2006) that pay attention to unexpressed voices in society (Moulaert et al., 2013).

These elements are an expression of different values and innovative practices that can affect a variety of fields in the public domain, in particular those that are more in proximity with spatial planning as an act of practices. It does not belong only to specific instruments that can be labelled as ‘strategic spatial plan’, but rather to a way of conceiving planning and approaching socio-spatial challenges based on ‘new ideas’ and

'out of the box' approaches that interrupt the 'process of continuity'. They are forms of innovation that can affect planning practices and cultures.

Following this line of argumentation, it is interesting to reflect on the possible hybrid outcomes of dynamics between existing institutional settings of spatial planning and innovation brought by different episodes having specific theoretical and/or methodological novelty.

The role of evolution in planning and innovation in practices has been the focus of different approaches, in particular those which addressed SSP as 'transformative episode'. Healey's scheme (2006b), in which she articulates the differences between governance episodes /practice /culture, is inspirational. Using an actor-structure approach she states that "to have transformative effects, governance innovations (such as new discourses, new allocatory or regulatory practices, the formation of new arenas or networks) must move from explicit formation episodes to arenas of investment and regulatory practice. To endure, they have to become institutionalized in the routines of governance practices" (Healey 2006b, p.305). There is a temporal passage between these bottom-up phases of innovation in governance, in which change is first seeded in episodes, then gets embedded in practices and afterward is mainstreamed in planning culture.

However, the institutionalisation of change is everything but a linear process, and looks rather as a stream of water in a karst area, with specific aspects disappearing from the surface and reappearing again miles away (see Metzger and Olesen in Part 1 on the ups and downs of strategic planning in the Øresund Region). First, changes are not always bottom-up. They can be brought by top-down dynamics, which do not have origin in localised experimental episodes but rather in mainstream agency, as for instance indicated by Gunn and Hillier (2012) in relation to UK reform, or in the

Chinese cases by Xu and Yeh and by Cao and Zheng in Part 1 of this volume. Second, not all episodes and elements of innovation are successful. On the contrary, there are unavoidable dynamics that lead to either the dispersion of innovative aspects of experimental practices, which lose momentum and have no follow up, or 'mainstreaming' processes that blur innovative characters (Reimer, 2013; Janin Rivolin, 2010), leaving simplified concepts as buzzwords for business-as-usual or even exploitative practices, as for instance the case of Rio de Janeiro (Vainer in Part 1, this volume). Third, however, in spite of some failures, those different sets of values, localised knowledges, socio and cultural capitals that disappear from current practices, might get hidden in space and society and ready to be re-mobilised, as for instance in the case of Antwerp (v.d. Broeck, in Part 1).

In these dynamics, SSP has two potential innovative dimensions. First, it is itself a socio-technical imaginary that attempts to break through existing 'ways of doing'. Transformative practices produce new frames for action and create innovative environments for experimentation within existing planning settings. They gather different ways of approaching socio-spatial transformation, constituting bundles of discourses that create an 'alter' planning imaginary in rupture with its continuity. Still, the innovation that 'springs up' is the outcome of silent processes and flows of knowledge that belong to various contextualised actors and are embedded in localised capital.

Second, it embeds the capacity to mobilise new sets of values because of its openness (in principle) to wider arenas. The normative dimension of SSP about its governance dynamics indicates the opening of the decision making arena to a larger groups of stakeholders that might bring in different cultural imaginaries as a connotative feature. Reflections about co-production (Albrechts, 2013) and the necessity to reach

silent voices in order to generate social innovation dynamics for providing answers to unexpressed needs (Moulaert et al, 2014) imply that SSP episodes have the potentiality to generate the momentum to release hidden and un-expressed values.

These sets of innovative approaches interact with the planning conditions of a local context, generating hybrid processes and new place-bounded approaches, as is well indicated in Part 1 of this volume by the various national cases, in which a socio-technical imaginary struggles with national planning cultures. However, as these cases can show, forms of innovations are far from being granted in practices. In some cases they are only partially achieved, or even seem to fail in providing new way of 'producing' space. Achievement depends on several factors and the 'accumulation' process in planning cultures is relatively unpredictable. The passage through episode, practice, and culture presents underground dynamics, devious paths and high chances of failure in the short term that might turn out subsequently to be useful capital for new episodes further in time and space. The capacity to maintain new rationalities 'on the surface', and the direction of the original path that is generated are at stake.

Planning system as hegemonic institutional frame

The interpretation of SSP as governance episodes and transformative practices brings the debate about SSP to a crossing path with that of thoughts on planning cultures and socio-institutional characteristics of planning systems. References to new planning cultures across Europe and elsewhere emphasize the fact that planning practices are deeply embedded in cultural contexts and, therefore, vary greatly (Sanyal, 2005; Getimis 2012; Othengrafen 2012; Othengrafen and Reimer 2013). It thus becomes interesting to reflect on the capacity of SSP to destabilize the institutional settings in which spatial planning operates.

Following an institutionalist perspective (Gonzales and Healey 2005; Reimer and Blotevogel 2012; Servillo and van den Broeck 2012), we can distinguish two broad perspectives when talking about the institutional "embedded-ness" of spatial planning activities. The first one concerns the 'institutional technologies' (Janin Rivolin, 2012), which prescribe legal and administrative structures for spatial order and structure, for securing land uses and for development within a specific defined area, and which are articulated in different competences along different administrative tiers. They constitute a framework or formal institutional setting in which spatial planning operates (Albrechts and da Rosa Pires, 2001). In this case, innovation brought by the SSP debate can be measured in terms of factual elements: adaptation of formal rules and laws, introduction of specific plans, etc.

However, the growing discontent with these formal descriptions and the subliminal feeling that "it remains a matter of dispute whether planning reality is in fact fundamentally determined by its basis in law" (Reimer and Blotevogel 2012, 10), as well as the evidence of a large variety of outcomes in the application of the same concepts/methods/tools in different places (Healey and Upton, 2010; Othengrafen and Reimer, 2013) has led to a second perspective that points to the more "hidden" institutional aspects in which specific planning systems are embedded (Knieling and Othengrafen, 2009). The formal institutional framework for spatial planning activities is subject to the interpretation and appliance of actors in different spatio-temporal settings (Servillo and van den Broeck 2012). Informal institutions, i.e. the perception of spatial challenges, actors' ideas, values and norms as well as rites and routines can have great influence on spatial planning practices (see Harrison on South Africa and Abdelwahab and Serag on Egypt in Part 1 of this volume).

Both debates on planning culture and socio-institutionalism in planning have pointed at a) the importance of a wider institutional framework that goes beyond mere technical elements (tools, instruments and defining laws); and b) the role of social dynamics, and actor-driven processes, which make the planning dynamics socially-embedded and non-neutral setting. The context-related and context-bounded characteristics of the planning system can be seen as a bundle of techniques, and allocative mechanisms and rules embedded in an institutional frame and produced by groups of actors. These are hegemonic imaginaries of planning systems supported by coalitions of actors that maintain them in and through practices.

Therefore, it becomes interesting to reflect on how innovation in planning induced by SSP as cultural imaginary is comprised of different socio-institutional dimensions. To explain these issues further I will use strategic-relational approach (SRA) (Jessop, 2001; 2008) and its application to planning system interpretation (Servillo and v.d.Broeck, 2012), associated with the role of imaginaries in a cultural political economy approach (Sum and Jessop, 2013).

In this interpretation a planning system can be seen as a system of rules and practices embedded in a wider institutional frame. Relevant actors support and replicate the system through practices and acts. Going further, Jessop's strategic-relational perspective points at how institutions' and actors' interaction is based on two processes: 'structurally inscribed strategic selectivities' and 'structurally oriented strategic calculation' (Jessop, 2001; 2008). SRA means that there is a reflexively—recursively dialectal form of interaction between actors and institutions. Particular institutions may privilege (but not determine) some actors, some actions, some techniques, etc. over others ('structurally inscribed strategic selectivities'). At the same time actors orient

their actions in function of their institutional frame ('structurally oriented strategic calculation').

SRA is useful because it indicates that actors in planning not only 'support' the consolidated way of doing, but also that the planning system itself steers the actors' behaviour and selects implicitly who and what can be involved and the types of practices that can be performed (see Sartorio about practices in Wales, in Part 1). Hence, the institutional construction and sets of values/practices are an expression of the supportive coalition of actors, which at the same time, selects and frames their course of action. It is as a sort of magnetic field, which Foucault (1980) discussed in terms of *dispositif* (Pløger, 2008). It maintains together the institutional setting and its strategic selectiveness and actors with their strategic orientation. At the same time it explains how, in the presence of structural change, some prominent actors remain, but with different mainstreamed attitudes.

These hegemonic cultural imaginaries support the formal institutional setting (i.e. the technical dimension of planning) and its allocative and authoritative power, being functional for its reproduction. 'Agency has both material and discursive bases and, although economic power is grounded in control over economic resources and state power is grounded in coercion, struggles among competing forces and interests in these domains are normally waged as much through the battle for ideas as through the mobilization of primarily material resources and capacities'(Sum, 2008, p. 1).

Therefore, SSP innovation and 'thinking out of the box' practices imply forms of interference, with the alteration of sets of values and reorientation of actors' behaviours. As mentioned before, SSP is first of all an alternative set of technical knowledge advocated by experts and practitioners (a different way of conceiving planning practice), thus a socio-technical imaginary. Moreover, it is methodologically

prone to mobilize different sets of values due to its openness (in principle) toward different voices. Hence, it potentially enables new sets of values in planning practices. In both cases, the interaction with the dominant frame (Pløger, 2004) remains the challenge for innovation.

Following this interpretation and on the base of a previous version of this interpretative scheme (Servillo and v.d. Broeck, 2012), Figure 1 illustrates the dynamics between a hegemonic institutional frame and the role of actors in planning systems.

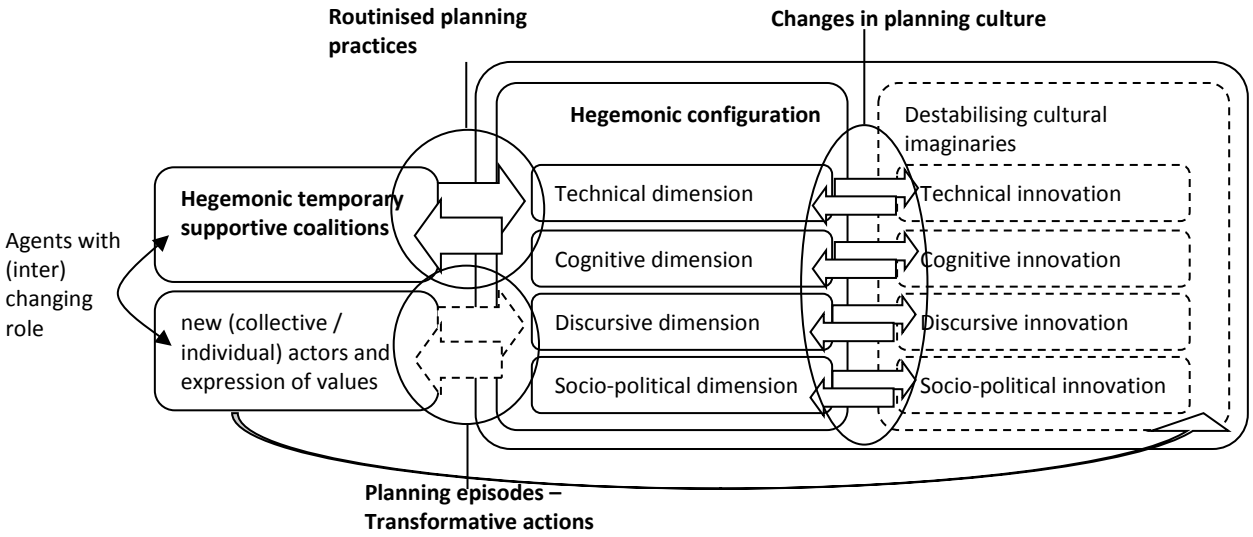

Figure 1- Changes in planning systems through planning episodes (re-adaptation of the original scheme in Servillo & v.d.Broeck, 2012).

The scheme indicates a spatial planning system as a set of technical devices inscribed in a socially-constructed institutional frame, which is based on imaginaries

'produced' from a supportive group formed by certain dominant actors. Governance dynamics are planning practices that are the material reproduction of a planning system and of the reflexively—recursively dialectal interaction between actors and institutions. Through these processes these actors—showing different degrees of intentionality and most probably different interests—come to share the same cognitive, cultural, political, structural frame covering the role of a temporarily supportive coalition of the hegemonic institutional frame (Servillo and v.d.Broeck, 2012).

Introduction of SSP innovation calls for the role of different individual and collective actors that (re)produce ways of conceiving practices. The arrival of new actors and their concomitant imaginaries corresponds to the internal evolution of existing institutions, due to some shift in dominant values, and are the primary factors of institutional change. Potentially transformative episodes that take place within the hegemonic institutional frame might generate change in some of its components.

Being SSP primarily characterised by a governance dimension, the scheme shows how the passage between episodes, practices and culture, which is the ultimate stage of embedded-ness of different cognitive dimensions, is not a linear dynamic. The role of actors in supporting the passage between phases is crucial. The positioning of actors involved in strategic planning episodes, the strife of imaginaries (Pløger, 2004), their relationship with supportive coalitions of the hegemonic institutional frame of planning and the sets of values brought in will determine the evolution of SSP insights in planning cultures. At the same time, it redefines the composition of the hegemonic supportive actors, as is well indicated in the Rio de Janeiro cases (Vainer in Part 1) in which SSP became the conceptual, methodological and rhetorical platform for a new hegemonic coalition ruling the city.

The different composition of actors and related cultural imaginaries in practices determines the above- or under-ground presence of certain sets of values and technical expertise. At the same time, the affirmation of certain values in the hegemonic frame occurs through a structurally inert process and also implies an unavoidable process of simplification, or of redistribution, of power.

The affirmation of new technical devices (e.g. types of strategic plan) and/or related legislation, the affirmation of new forms of knowledge (e.g. programs in schools), allocative and normative mechanisms (e.g. in relation with EU structural funds expenditure), public and private interaction (e.g. contractual forms, investment opportunities) or the affirmation of discourses (e.g. interpretation of discourses on sustainable development, territorial cohesion, resilience, etc.) are forms of changes in the institutional frame that can be mobilised by SSP cultural imaginaries. They can be generated through SSP episodes and experimental practices in which different sets of values are brought in by new actors or by dynamics that generate different collective/dominant imaginaries.

SSP transformative (governance) episodes may challenge the dominant institutional frame if they carry a different set of rationalities, which may introduce changes in practices and eventually in planning culture (Lowndes, 2005). The mobilisation of different cultural imaginaries can be done by excluded actors – unexpressed voices in society – or actors in the supportive coalitions who change rationalities (e.g. changes of discourses and of cognitive dimension), for instance influenced by new discourses and a shift of cognitive domain (e.g. the rise of the collaborative planning turn).

SSP and changes in institutional frames

The scheme in Figure 1 can be used to describe the dimensions of a contextualized institutional frame of spatial planning: technical, cognitive, discursive and socio-economic dimensions. At the same time, these dimensions can be used to break down changes inducted by SSP. It is assumed that changes occurring in planning systems are spread over these domains, albeit being mutually related categories in the institutional frame of the planning system in specific contexts.

a. Institutional technique

The first dimension concerns the legal and administrative structure for spatial planning, which is conceived as an institutional technique. Here, the forms of innovation brought by SSP are the most evident and have been long discussed in literature (Mintzberg, 1994). They include the various types of instruments, tools, and rules, and also the legislative changes in the frame that draws the boundary of spatial planning practices. The most evident innovation is the constituency of the strategic spatial plan as a well-defined instrument (Healey, 1997).

Since the 1980s, there has been a world-wide proliferation of strategic plans, which vary in terms of scale (from region to neighbourhood interventions) and technical setting (role of vision and actions, type of decision making, etc). Methodological indications have been elaborated, such as the four-track approach (Albrechts, 2004; 2010b) which appears to be one of the most comprehensive ways of conceiving the components of a strategic planning approach, comprising: a) an integrating vision that can steer different policies and interventions in an integrated fashion; b) coherent and pragmatic sets of means and actions to implement the vision; c) the inclusion of a wider arena in the decision making process: and d) specific communicative strategy for larger

public audience in order to have a larger awareness of the process going on. These are the characteristics of some of the most successful episodes in the recent history of planning both in Europe and world-wide (Albrechts, 2006; 2010a).

Strategic plans can have different legislative formats and constituencies, and in some cases even be without formal legislative legitimacy, which induces interesting institutional struggles and forms of innovation (e.g. in Italy – for an overview, Servillo and Lingua, 2014; Sartorio, 2005, and in Part 1 of this volume, see Fedeli).

Moreover, the legislative dimension can also refer to the spatial pertinence of the plans. SSP cases have induced governance arrangements for metropolitan and urban regions in which the tailoring of policy measures for aggregated areas that go beyond traditional administrative boundaries remains one of the biggest challenges in planning (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2009; Balducci et al, 2011; Kunzmann, 2004), as well illustrated in the Øresund cross-border Region (Metzger and Olesen, this volume Part 1), in the metropolitan plans in Australia (Maginn et al. this volume) in the French way of dealing with city-regions (Demazière and Serrano, this volume), in the Italian metropolitan experimentation (Fedeli, this volume), and in the Greater Vancouver plan (Abbott, this volume). Also in these cases, the formal institutional setting of inter-municipal cooperation and enabling different tools varies substantially according to the context (Healey 2006b; Gualini, 2006), Nevertheless, the discussion about strategic plans should not be confused with a wider interpretation of SSP and its influence in the planning domain. Innovations can be found in sectorial approaches or in new ways of conceiving traditional planning dynamics, as well as in regional/local development strategies (e.g. some case of EU structural funds programmes and as also indicated in the chapter about the north American experiences by Bryson and Schiverly Slotterback in Part 1).

b. Cognitive dimension

The frame of innovations induced by SSP can, therefore, be extended to the cognitive dimension – a second dimension that depicts the planning domain as a heuristic area. SSP represents an agent of innovation because it is conceived as a cultural construction within the planning debate. The challenged cognitive dimension is characterised by the implicit and explicit knowledge that is produced in planning practices and research.

It is possible to recognize in this dimension both the normative concepts of the SSP debate and the variety of approaches that have been experimented and fine-tuned in different contexts – and this volume represents an extraordinary collection of contextualised productions of knowledge which address the debate internationally. Challenges for the planning domain include, on one hand the plea for a more result-oriented attitude, on the other hand a social innovative agenda in which the aim is not only a technical structuring of the process but also the opening to unexpressed voices of decision making arenas in order to be more 'efficient' (from a wider socio-spatial perspective). Practices and theoretical reflections are attempts at responses to these challenges in each contextual cognitive dimension of planning.

Part of the issue is also the cognitive construction of spatial imaginaries and wider general ethical principles that lead the professional actors in planning and the public realm. First, it is the way space is conceived (e.g. the social-relational interpretation of space) and how it is embedded in practices, such as the ways in which urban areas are imagined and how they are rooted in collective and 'expert' imaginaries. Second, it is what Albrechts addresses as value rationality (2004), in which concepts such as sustainability, equity and spatial justice, cohesion are conceived.

Within this framework, SSP generates opportunities for challenges to re-utilised practices and well-established systems of value. SSP as cultural construction based on existing but unexpressed and latent values interacts with the contextualised cognitive dimension of planning, which has a strong national and regional bias. At the same time, this dimension is challenged not only internally, but also by international flows of knowledge, 'ways of doing' and best practices (Stead, 2012; Peck and Theodore, 2010). Relevant actors which mobilise different cognitive dimensions and their involvement (or not) in episodes determine changes to existing imaginaries and the rise of different imaginaries.

c. Discursive dimension

The cognitive dimension in planning systems has a mutual interaction with discourse production (the third dimension), which becomes the vehicle for knowledge and ideas transfer. Discourses, discursive chains and key- (or buzz-) words (Müller, 2008; Sum, 2008; Servillo, 2010) are crucial to understanding the policy agenda in planning and socio-economic dynamics, because they represent the translation of the cognitive dimension into communicative practices (Mac Callum, 2009). An evident example is the way in which policy agenda swings between recurrent use of discourses on integration and social inclusion on one side and growth and development on the other side, and how values are mobilised (Servillo, 2010). At the same time, and as additional example, the now-dominant theme of 'smartness' shows how some discourses become hegemonic topics in specialised, political and generalist debates, steering policy agenda and practices (see Metzger and Olesen, in Part 1).

Groups of discourses and ideas constitute cultural imaginaries (Sum, 2008) that at the same time inform the cognitive dimension and steer the construction of policy-

agendas in the public domain as well as in spatial planning (see, for instance, the African case, as indicated by Esho and Obudho, in Part 1). In this perspective, SSP is both a self-standing discourse in planning (as a method in planning) and a fundamental carrier of planning-related themes (an enabler of un-expressed needs). First, the role of SSP in addressing changes in the planning domain is itself a heuristic field that generates instrumental discourses, in which methodological and technical insights constitute its normative dimension (e.g. in Italy, as Fedeli indicates, Part 1). Second, the debate on SSP is able to bring in other rationalities, as, for instance, ways of conceiving specific spatial entities, such as cross-border or metropolitan areas.

Therefore, methodological discourses on SSP convey both changes in a planning system, working on the instrumental knowledge and on the policy agenda. Methodological and procedural dimensions are combined with contents of policy approaches, which are mutually supportive for the affirmation of a group of actors' policy agenda. As an example, critiques of SSP as enabler or opponent of neo-liberal dynamics (Olesen, 2013) show how themes are blended in integrated discursive chains. If seen from this perspective, the various rationalities that compose the SSP imaginary become shaped by the dominant discourses in the context in which SSP took place as an act of practice. The African and Rio de Janeiro cases (Part 1, this volume) typify this regard.

d. Socio-economic characteristics

The final dimension concerns the socio-economic characteristics in which the planning system is embedded. This is a wider dimension, and it does not only refer to the political regime in a specific area (a conservative vs. progressive, or a nationalist vs. federalist political coalition in power), but also to the socio-economic regime that

characterises the place, which includes the welfare system, its redistributive capacity, the health of its economy, the cohesiveness of its society, and so on.

This dimension influences the capacity to address SSP in specific places, and at the same time the role of innovation brought by SSP practices. For instance, the way in which private sector and corporations are considered in socio-economic contexts has repercussions on different forms of interaction between public and private spheres and consequent implications for public private partnerships and the role of private actors that can be advocated in planning practices (see the national cases in Part 1). At the same time, SSP episodes and discourses related to SSP may interfere, producing ruptures and questions for change. Inequality, forms of discrimination, socio-spatial injustices but also specific interests can become sources of opposition and a strong lobby in SSP dynamics that may generate structural change (see v.d.Broeck in Part 1).

All in all, as shown by the chapters in Part 1, transformative practices of SSP activate a kaleidoscope of effects along different dimensions of planning culture and the institutional frame of planning systems. These transformations are socially and spatially bounded in contextualised planning systems. At the same time, international agreements and regulations, foreign planning approaches spread through 'best practice', together with global political turns, internal debates and quests for change, enrich the debate and encourage reforms in national and regional contexts which interfere with the contextualized frames in these domains.

Changes are activated in sets of values and norms by relevant actors and make unpredictable the shape of innovation that will be determined, as they are blended with a large variety of local and supra-local socio-spatial dynamics. At the same time, struggles among imaginaries are caused by new episodes and new actors that reproduce

planning through practices. Transformative episodes, together with changes in technical, cognitive, discursive and socio-economic values, encourage changes of perspectives that combine trans-national similarities and context-based specificities.

The effects can be a combination of short and long term elements of innovation, of which it is not possible to predict the persistence. Paradoxically, even controversial applications of SSP normative stances can make a breakthrough in consolidated practices in the long run, while 'best practices' can lose momentum and reach a dead end rather quickly.

Conclusive thoughts: SSP for institutional resilience

Returning to Friedmann (1987, p.36) and his meta-theoretical question of "how to make technical knowledge in planning effective in informing public actions", we can sum up that SSP is a vehicle of innovation that determines a shift in consolidated practices and related planning culture because of two meta dimensions. First, it is a technical imaginary (made of normative stances). Second, it is conceived as a governance process through which new imaginaries and different set of values can be mobilised. SSP has a technical component, which leads to innovation in practices, but it has a wider reverberation effect given by the possibility of introducing new cultural imaginaries. It is the plea for thinking 'out of the box' and bringing actors 'out of their comfort zone' as indicated by Albrechts (2010b).

Changes in planning do not happen through linear accumulative processes, but depend on several factors. In order to challenge the hegemonic imaginary a new cultural imaginary and sets of values needs to be mobilised. These are generated through the

opening of arenas to a variety of actors and struggles between different sets of values. The capacity to transform episodes in governance culture depends on the breakthrough of innovative elements in the dominant institutional frame. In this sense, the role of discourses and the effects on the cognitive dimension in planning are the key dimensions to challenge current ways of doing and up-scaling insights from innovative governance episodes.

This approach provides support to thorough investigation of how creative practices of actors and relevant social groups may give rise to a search for new solutions to perceived problems, resulting in new planning instruments and systems. When investigating the effects of SSP in the long run, the level of investigation that refers to the adopted policies is generally insufficient. The imaginaries that are confronted, the hidden and unexpressed ones that could be mobilised, and the efforts to open up the arena to these 'alter' imaginaries are crucial factors in determining the emergence of innovative elements in governance processes. Otherwise, like rivers in the karst areas, these imaginaries and sets of values will continue to run hidden below the surface in social groups that do not enter the fora of public decision making.

The above allows also further reflections on the conceptualisation of 'institutional resilience' of a planning system. It extends the discussion about resilience capacity (Davoudi et al., 2013; Folke, 2010; Klein et al., 2003), to the capacity of the planning system being structurally able to cope with spatial challenges and the 'disturbances' they might represent. Hence, it concerns the capacity of the planning system to address these challenges in a strategic and integrated way, in order to pursue resistance and adaptation (to mention some of the different interpretations that resilience debate might raise).

Nevertheless, despite its interpretive approach, a crucial aspect of a resilient planning system becomes the institutional capacity to set meaningful and feasible strategies in a selective manner and to adopt flexible measures according to changing spatial configurations and dimensions of the phenomena. It implies a socio-spatial context with high learning capacity and adaptability (Davoudi et al., 2013). It represents the ultimate scope of effectiveness in planning brought via innovative SSP, which can generate accumulation of knowledge in order to properly address oncoming socio-spatial challenges.

Institutionalisation of practices that are able to cope with them is the challenge for the long run, for which SSP can be a domain of social learning and experimentation. Socio-spatial challenges related to macro dynamics (e.g. world-wide demographic flows and changes, climate-generated dynamics, etc) require new ways of conceiving public actions in planning (Friedmann, 2004). Therefore, the achievement of a modern understanding of the public realm and its governance dimension, which should facilitate resilience to macro and micro socio-spatial dynamics, is the long-run challenge.

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