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Between vision and response capacity – configuring metropolitan development

INAUGURAL SPEECH BY PROF. DR. PETER ACHE

Radboud University Nijmegen



INAUGURAL SPEECH

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The Metropolitan Millennium is here. Looking at various indicators, a further concentration in large urban settings is visible, creating highly dynamic ‘metropolitan regions’. This development is not without conflict and tensions, among others creating various ‘peripheries’, both inside and outside.

The complex metropolitan realities are difficult to grasp. But, in professional and political terms, we want to create ‘spaces for hope’ – in a comprehensive fashion. Compared with our ambition, we lack instruments and processes, or in more general terms, we lack a capacity to configure metropolitan development. To be precise, it is not likely to implement a meta-approach in a kind of super-algorithm guiding our actions – and, actually, with such an ambition we search in the wrong places! What Peter Ache suggests in his inaugural speech, is to further develop a sense of opportunity: If we can imagine, we will be able to manage. Our capacity to develop visions in shared constellations might be a more appropriate way forward to manage metropolitan development – and various experiments in Europe emphasize this. The speech will discuss this hypothesis.

Peter Ache (1960) studied Raumplanung (spatial planning) at Technical University Dortmund, where he also received his PhD with a research on local innovative milieus in old industrial regions. Since January 2012 he is the Chair of Planning at Radboud University. Peter Ache is a member of the German Academy of Spatial Research and Planning (ARL). He is a member of editorial boards and reviewer for international scientific journals in the field of planning.

BETWEEN VISION AND RESPONSE CAPACITY -
CONFIGURING METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENT

Between vision and response capacity – configuring metropolitan development

Inaugural speech delivered at the acceptance of the post of Professor of Spatial planning at the Nijmegen School of Management, Radboud University Nijmegen, on Wednesday 12 June 2013

by prof. dr. Peter Ache

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The 'Metropolitan Millennium' is here. Looking at various indicators, you can see a further concentration, especially of population, in large urban settings, creating highly dynamic 'metropolitan regions'. This development is not without conflict and tensions, creating various 'peripheries', both inside and outside the areas. Complex metropolitan realities are difficult to grasp in all their intricacies. But, in professional and political terms, we still want to create 'spaces for hope' in a comprehensive and sustainable fashion. However, we lack instruments and processes or, in more general terms, we lack a capacity to 'configure' metropolitan development. To be precise, it is not easy to implement a 'meta' approach in a kind of 'super-algorithm' for guiding our actions and, in fact, with such an ambition we would be searching in the wrong places! What I would like to communicate in this talk is that we should further develop a sense of opportunity: If we can only *imagine*, we will be able to manage. Our capacity to develop visions in shared constellations might be a more appropriate way forward in our desire to manage metropolitan development – and various experiments in Europe emphasise this.

In this paper I discuss this hypothesis. Part One addresses some of the main framework conditions that lead to the assessment of a world that is more 'spiky' than flat (Richard Florida) and also discusses some of the resulting perspectives. Part Two then continues by explaining a 'vision-making' exercise, the Greater Helsinki Vision 2050 competition. Part Three provides conceptual and theoretical reflections on this exercise. Finally, the text uses lessons learned in the exercise to outline perspectives on Research & Development and education, suggesting a working programme for the years ahead.

(1) METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENT –

SCENARIOS OF ISLANDS AND PERIPHERIES IN A SPIKY WORLD

The main argument of this paper is based on analysing and interpreting metropolitan regions as a new spatial category, which requires new modes of governance to develop a forward-looking territorial response capacity.

A useful point of departure in spatial terms is Pierre Veltz's hypothesis (Veltz, 2004). He sees an *archipelago* structure evolving in Europe's economic geography. His scenario foresees *islands floating in desert seas*, which is actually quite realistic; at least when looking at the developments in Eastern Germany with its perforated landscapes and perforated cities (Lütke-Daldrup, 2001). In terms of a general development scenario for Europe, the most prominent island can be seen in Figure 1. In a set of several development scenarios, the so-called 'competition scenario' depicts a further concentrated European 'Pentagon' as the most dynamic economic and innovative region where the highest concentration of populations are expected in 2030 (ESPON 3.2 Project, 2007; Robert & Lennertz, 2007). Such a scenario has further implications for such metropolitan spaces. How can we reconcile issues such as competitiveness and cohesion (Ache & Andersen, 2009), where one set of factors pushes large city regions into the maelstrom of global competition, while the other set of factors requires a local anchoring

in urban societies formed by various citizen groups (Massey, 2005)? Will it still be possible to design cohesive places or will the *divides*¹ in metropolitan societies further increase (P. Taylor, 2004)? Figure 2 depicts such a situation, where the metropolis has become an assemblage of clearly defined special territories of the ‘innovation and communication’ society – where a *network bourgeoisie of knowledge capitalists* establishes a *global plutocracy* (with reference to Taylor, 2004)?

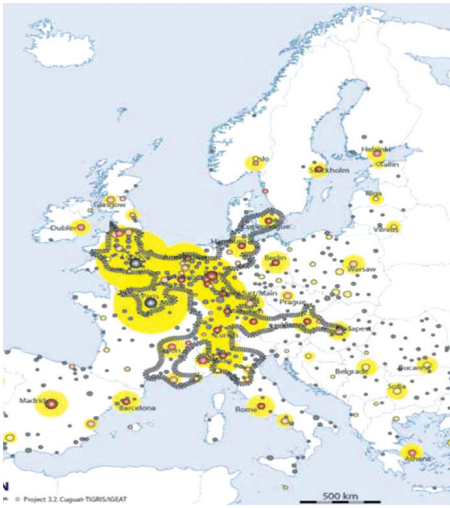


Figure 1. ESPON Pentagon scenarios
(Source: ESPON 3,2 2007)



Figure 2. Metropolis as assemblage (Source: Author)

So what could be a proper set of strategies for a *Europolis* with 70 million inhabitants (P Hall & K Pain, 2006), based on a discontinuous geography but functionally closely integrated? And once we have the necessary strategies for creating the *Europolis*, how could we form appropriate strategies on a global scale (Burdett & Sudjic, 2007; UN Habitat, 2009)? And finally, what is the role of planning?²

The reader might imagine that the metropolitan region exists as a clearly defined geographical or territorial feature. This is actually not the case, given on-going development trends and the variations in scale and size. For example, Greater Helsinki covers a region with 1.2 million inhabitants. The largest metropolitan spaces today have more than 30 million inhabitants (UN Habitat, 2008, e.g. Tokyo). The other possible perspective on the metropolitan region is not just seeing it as a new geographical feature – as a container space which satisfies the demands of a globally integrated system – but as socially co-constructed and politically shaped. In fact, for policy makers these spaces are



Figure 3. Object of desire (Source: Author, F. Lang)

frequently objects of desire, especially the desire to leave an impression on a global scale, as many outstanding architectural projects demonstrate (Jencks, 2006; McNeill, 2006). The symbolic aspect of such projects, as can be seen from Figure 3, is close to historic forerunners, especially to Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* movie and the symbolism it created³.

Symbolic values can be linked to a governance perspective and direct our interest in particular to policy and strategy-making processes as interesting fields for deeper analysis. So far, few metropolitan spaces have, for instance a proper institutional structure that would perform the multiple tasks, which metropolitan regions are supposed to fulfil (Knieling, 2009). In the case of Finland, the metropolis is a contested field of cooperative, but also competitive actions and the discussion about the preferred institutional form has been continuing for almost ten years now (Ache, 2011). In this context, new instruments are also developed and existing instruments, such as *vision* making, are re-evaluated.

It is an intricate relation that we have in front of us, which Neuman and Hull (Neuman & Hull, 2009) formulated as follows:

“What has changed today is the complexity and scale of the mega-city region, and its multiple intersections with virtual spaces and flows of globalization. This complexity and scale not only has clouded our image of the city (even as it has reinforced its centrality), but has also clouded our very ability to construct an image of the city region. This, of course, has direct consequences for the ability to govern such regions. *If we cannot imagine, then we cannot manage.*”

So, if we are incapable of developing an imagination, or a vision, an idea, we will not be able to manage growing urban complexity. Compared with such a critical comment, the creation and design of urban and in particular of metropolitan imaginations has

become very important recently (see, for instance, the *Le Grand Paris* exercise or the *Greater Helsinki Vision 2050*).

For about a decade now, the metropolis – or metropolitan region – has been central to such exercises in spatial and strategic thinking. In a European context, the European Spatial Development Perspective (EC, 1999) could be mentioned here first, sparking – for instance in Germany – a discussion about metropolitan spaces of European importance, which many years later resulted in a debate about a new category for organizing national territory (ARL, 2007; Knieling, 2009). In fact, the metropolis is *the* object of our times, albeit somewhat fuzzy, where the global research community discusses its existence (starting with Sassen, 2001; UN Habitat, 2006; from a global South perspective, see Robinson, 2006), its function (Castells, 2010; P. J. Taylor, Hoyler, & Verbruggen, 2010), and the way it operates (Peter Hall & K Pain, 2006), as well as its many variations (see the special issue of *Regional Studies*, Neuman & Hull, 2009), as well as the political and strategic dimensions (e.g. MacLeod & Jones, 2011).

Terminology is important and terms used include metropolis, metropolitan space, metropolitan region, capital city, and capital city region⁴. It seems that our existing set of categories, theories and concepts is insufficient – or in the worst case we run into a kind of *metropolitanology* – as Gleesson (2012) critically pointed out. The metropolis has probably much more of a transitional quality⁵ than anything else. The main element of the *form*, which is classically formulated (Benevolo, 2000 (8)) as an idea of density, morphology, mono or poly-centricity (Nordregio (Lead Partner), 2005 rev.), is not that essential anymore. Furthermore, precise terminology is maybe not that necessary, if we see the metropolis as a political object and accept the discursive construction of policy (Fischer, 2003). Seeing the metropolis from that perspective, it is not simply a new existing territorial form, but the result of the preferences and intentions of actors who create it in different variants. It is a blurred definitional array, allowing for agreement or accordance, frequently operating on the basis of a *perceived similarity* (Fischer, 2003) between actors. And the *vision* is the new script of and for the metropolis – created to establish a sense of place and to give meaning to it.

(2) A VISION-MAKING EXERCISE – GREATER HELSINKI VISION 2050

A good example for the current reflections on vision making is the Greater Helsinki Vision competition. This project provides a number of perspectives, which are relevant for the discussion: generating a vision; the quality and content of the vision as such; and the context for the vision exercise (for an extended treatment see Ache 2011).

In 2006 the international competition *Greater Helsinki Vision 2050* (henceforth GHV 2050) was jointly announced by the region's fourteen municipalities, in cooperation with the Ministry of the Environment and the Finnish Association of Architects. The aim of the participants in Greater Helsinki Vision 2050 was to create a common plan for the sustainable development of land use, housing and transport. The basic assumption

was further population growth, leading to an estimated 1.8 million inhabitants by 2050. Altogether 109 entries were submitted by the deadline in 2007. Of these, nine received an award, and these were presented in December 2007. The competition and the follow-up generated a rich set of ideas, from new physical structures to social processes, which in its entirety cannot be reported here. Rather, given the focus on *configuring the metropolis*, and on the interaction of institutional representatives, I will focus on the working group on metropolitan governance, strategic planning, and the operations of the metropolitan space⁶.

A good starting point for all groups was a set of *ideas flocks*, with more than 100 ideas which were extracted from the various entries and prepared in such a way that they were ready to discuss and use during a workshop. The ideas flocks effectively transferred results from the competition to the follow-up process. In the case of the group working on metropolitan governance and strategic planning, the flock comprised eight ideas, ranging from legal and formal provisions to quality benchmarks such as zero-emission towns.

One very interesting idea involved what are known as *City cells* (see Figure 4). This idea is strongly citizen-oriented, promoting a planning-cell approach (Dienel, 1978). City cells constitute a kind of ‘social’ *Silicon Valley*, a grassroots development in city quarters (which are the cells) of around 10,000 inhabitants, who decide in democratic settings about their lives. The mayor of the city is a benevolent super-coordinator of this

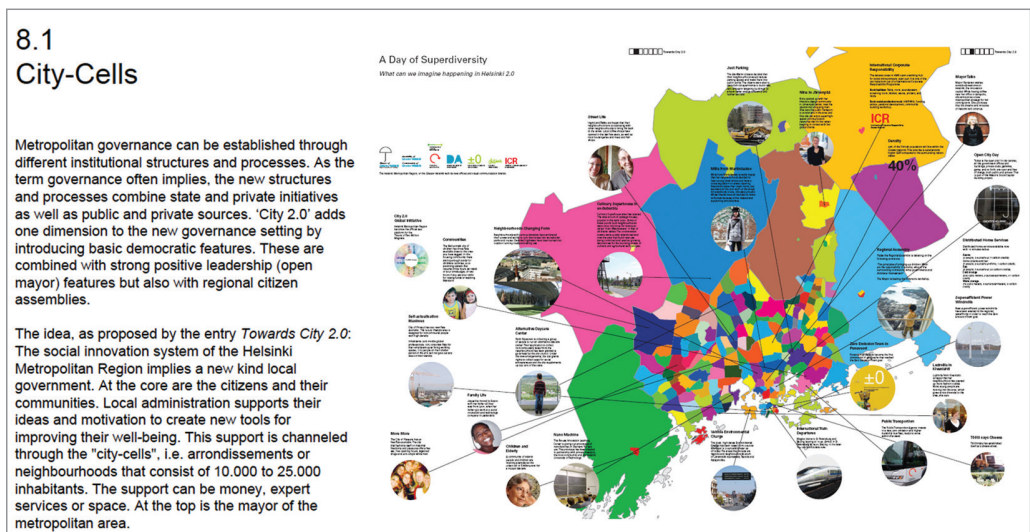


Figure 4. Idea Flock (Source: WSP, DEMOS & YTK 2008)

new metropolitan institution. The approach is summed up in 'a day of superdiversity', which addresses citizens, their identity and the power to act in a condition which we might call perforated sovereignty (Harding, 2007).

In the view of the experts, City cells were part of the context and formation of the multicultural society. They felt that Finland and its metropolitan region were *developing into a multicultural society*. This resulted in *questions of identity, the integration of newcomers, and – giving the entire set a certain twist, safe neighbourhoods*⁷.

There was also the issue of administration, focusing on the role of the *mayor*. A mayor is usually seen as a *mediator between the state and the neighbourhood and local politics*. The particularities of such a function were discussed. The prime challenge was to *design cooperation*; and as secondly, who could play the role of *champion* for all each the strategies? This reflects the conviction of experts that all of these various strategies and aims need an outstanding figure to take responsibility.

However, the mayor, who represents the metropolitan region, is also framed by other actors. The aspect of *framing or binding* is probably not just a feature of Finnish society, with its short *societal* distances. Despite being the popular face for and the champion of policies, this personality should also be embedded in the usual structures of local and regional policy making. However, this person is only conceivable against the background of a strongly formulated government policy for the metropolitan region.

The discussion, which focused on the mayor, provided interesting perspectives on institutions and actions. On the one hand, the wish was expressed to achieve better and higher participation and to give citizens a voice in defining the future of the region. On the other, the experts were convinced that someone must be a champion. But this person – and it is clearly a person not an institution – must be framed if not harnessed by existing codes of conduct. Overall, the framed leadership, the governance not unbound, creates the interesting issue of feedback: effectiveness and direction, new ways of allocating either 'power to' or 'power over', all this implies a strong position to break rules and to break up positions, in particular the stiffening ones.

A mayor who makes other actors 'unlearn' things will pull institutions out of their comfort zones – and create conflict! The actors seem to be aware of this – at least sub-consciously – which is why they emphasise the anchoring aspect. Unsurprisingly, during the exercise there were no conflicts – and most of the operations of the vision were seen as non-conflictual.

As already mentioned, the working group on metropolitan governance and strategic planning stands as part of the whole, demonstrating the working process and working results. Furthermore, one has to point out that most participants in that group have institutional backgrounds within the region. Inhabited cultures and standards clearly frame the discussions, thus "producing contingent products of diverse actions informed by the beliefs of agents as they arise in the context of traditions" (Rhodes, 2007, p 18). The timeframe for the exercise was actually far too short, for instance, to shape a full

“authentic dialogue” (J. Innes & Booher, 1999), especially with a view to more adaptive features resulting from longer term collaborative processes. However, the exercise established a common language and relationships between participants, and creativity was stimulated. To repeat, the work with the rich set of thoughts in the competition contributions and the attempt to come to a shared assessment were intended to result in a further approximation of a possible vision: a ‘co-constructed’ vision.

(3) INSTITUTIONS, ACTORS, AND VISION MAKING REVIEWED

The metropolitan region of Greater Helsinki is an institution in the making and the Greater Helsinki Vision was – and is – instrumental in the creation of this new *metropolitan region*, addressing possible futures for the metropolitan space and creating a new action situation. The overall vision has been captured as a time line towards 2050 (see Figure 5) – a ‘string of pearls’ on the way to a more sustainable future, outlining interim steps and benchmarks for strategic action. The City cell idea is one of the endeavours leading to a different future in 2050.



Figure 5. GHV 2050 Time line (Source: WSP, DEMOS & YTK 2008)

So how can we understand and interpret that exercise on a deeper theoretical or conceptual level?

A powerful instrument for the analysis can be borrowed from institutional theory. Institutional theory provides a well-established conceptual framework that can be used to interpret the Greater Helsinki Vision process. Institutional theory has a long-standing tradition with at least three distinctive scientific branches, namely political sciences (Scharpf, 1993), social sciences (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), and economics (Samuels, 1988). The work by the late Nobel Prize winner Elinor Ostrom (2005) belongs to the latter group, providing the institutional analysis and development framework (IAD). IAD is compatible and partly integrates theories and concepts from game theory, micro-economic theory, transaction cost theory, social choice theory, public choice, constitutional theory, theory of public goods, and concepts of common pool resources (Ostrom 2005, 28).

Ostrom's work can be used to interpret the observations and it offers two main perspectives:

The first relates to common pool resources. Much of Ostrom's work is about the management of common pool resources such as forests or water. Their characteristics include non-excludability and rivalry, i.e. everyone can use them and the resource is finite. One could argue that with the new spatial structure of a metropolis a very complex variant of a common pool resource problem is addressed. It starts with the dimension land use, where there is a finite amount of land and one does not wish to exclude users, and it extends to a complex resource climate – which is non-excludable – and the free-rider problem as one specific dimension of rivalry⁸. The most exemplary theme is probably urban sprawl (European Environment Agency, 2006). This is a negative land-use phenomenon, resulting from scarce land available for building and from municipalities extending built-up areas competitively. Urban sprawl clearly leads to arguments in favour of better coordinated metropolitan space and more effective planning institutions at the level of the functional urban region (for the USA e.g. J. E. Innes, Booher, & Di Vittorio, 2011). In distributed institutional settings, such as the one related to metropolitan spaces, the characteristics of common pool resources create conditions for cooperative action.

However, an alternative view, which cannot be discussed here in detail, is also possible. Given the strong 'object of desire' characteristics as well as the particularities of the land system – especially the (partial) private ownership structure – the metropolis might also be seen as being on the edge of becoming a 'club good'. Being a 'club good' means that the metropolis is an 'exclusive' good and that you, the eponymous citizen, must be a member of the club to fully benefit from it; it's not 'free' for all (see Figure 6).

The second perspective results from the framework of institutional analysis. In principle, configuring the metropolis can be understood as an action arena. There are several elements that those engaged in institutional analysis apply to understand an

	excluding	non-excluding
rivalrous	Private Good	Common Pool 
non-rivalrous	 Club Good	Public Good

Figure 6. Metropolis as a 'Good' (Source: Author)

action arena. Biophysical or material conditions, attributes of the community, and rules are the exogenous variables of an action arena. The arena itself consists of a specific action situation, in this case the core of the GHV competition and follow-up process, and of participants. Participants interact in a specific external framework and create in an action situation a set of outcomes which are evaluated and which are having an impact on following rounds of action situations. The internal structure of an action situation relates to the production of solutions or outcomes. Actors, who are assigned positions that literally make it possible to act, are linked in the action situation. They have information about and control over actions and are knowledgeable of potential outcomes, possibly including a view of the costs and benefits of potential outcomes. Using additions such as *potential* or *possibly* clearly denote an element of uncertainty, i.e. that the probability of specific actions leading to certain outcomes is inherently unknowable. Actors are restricted in that respect and cannot fully grasp all outcomes; in other words, they are not fully rational in their behaviour and decision-making. One essential element of institutional analysis is the rules, which exist as exogenous variables but are also applied or co-created in the problem solution. Rules order relationships in the action situation. Three categories are used: operational rules, collective choice rules and constitutional rules. If individuals voluntarily participate in an action situation they must share some general sense that most of the rules governing the situation are appropriate. Note the use of the word *most*: there is always an element of ambiguity. This ambiguity – in combination with the partial rationality discussed before – establishes another essential element in the action situation: learning. Actors can learn in action situations, either from each other or from the achieved outcomes, and have the opportunity to adjust their behaviours accordingly.

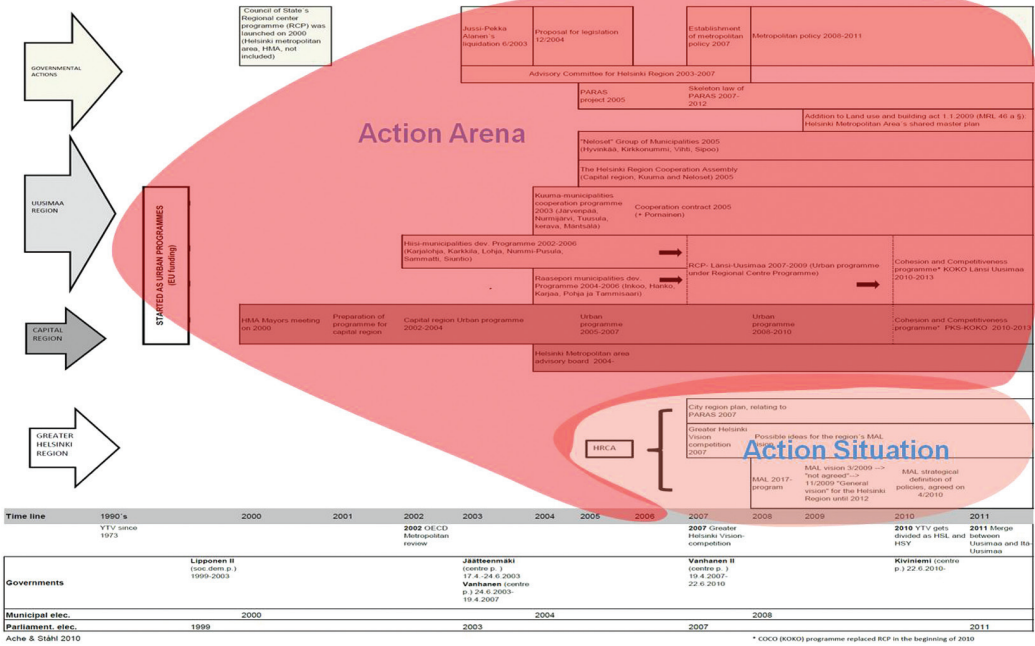


Figure 7. IAD Analysis (Source: Author)

In the context of the current text, it is particularly important to examine what is the *action arena* and *action situation* (see Figure 7).

The Greater Helsinki Vision competition – and the subsequent continuation process – can be understood as an *action situation*, which faces many challenges.

The *external framework conditions* in recent years have led to a *metropolitan* policy angle, which partly encourages actors to think and act in a metropolitan way. The national government put some external pressure on the discussion of a metropolitan concept, including a metropolitan review provided by the OECD⁹.

The competition started as a one-off exercise and turned into a continuation process. In addition, the process shifted from the rather informal original setting to a more formal institutional arena of regional planning; and it will probably not stop there. Using the terminology of institutional analysis, the *one-shot action situation* turned into a *flow of action situations*, including a change in *institutional composition*.

The vision, although highly complex, can be understood as a new *collective choice rule*, prescribing and invoking norms for future development. The vision is intended to

shape the behaviour of actors, although in its final form it provides a rather loose framework of orientation and is not strictly implemented. Sanctions cannot be applied, unless the state steps in¹⁰. In a positive way, the vision is supported by a letter of intent, binding aims and objectives to investment programmes, which are partly financed by the state.

Within action situations, actors from different institutions and with different powers cooperate. This starts at the level of the municipality, which can be seen as a collective actor (Le Galès, 2002)¹¹. Helsinki has *primacy* in the current action arena, being the economic, political, cultural capital. However, the situation is also asymmetric – especially in terms of the problem solution capacity: the surrounding municipalities mainly provide the plots of developable land for the next rounds of growth.

As has been shown, IAD provides a rich set of perspectives that can be used to analyse this situation. But, we also need to add another perspective, which results from individuals acting in the situation. The institutional actors send individuals as their representatives into the action situation. They not only negotiate the vision within the action situation but, also, bring the vision back into the institutional structures. The vision – much like a script – frames and influences the activities in their home institutions. This process of taking the vision into institutions opens up an additional perspective, which results from an understanding of public policy as a discursive construct (Fischer, 2003). In a discursive setting, the belief systems of actors play an important role. Such belief systems shape *facticity* and are reflections of what is called the ‘myth of the given’ (Fischer, 2003). From such a perspective, the metropolis – and a vision for creating it – can be interpreted in numerous ways. It is a *metaphor*, linking past experiences and perceptions in a comparative fashion to current times. As a *synecdoche* it stands as *pars pro toto*, resembling the nation state and its fate. It comes as a *story*, usually the story of globalization, which helps to accommodate the amorphous challenges resulting from a global space of flows (Castells, 2010). It can also be understood as a *model*, frequently using existing role models from elsewhere, e.g. global cities such as London, New York and Tokyo. So, the metropolis is highly *symbolic* and it therefore also has considerable potential for ambiguity (Fischer, 2003).

These aspects all show that the metropolis as a new action arena is a very ambivalent structure and process (Ache, 2011). Furthermore, in complex settings, such as the ones posed by metropolitan spaces, the interactions between land-use systems are of such a magnitude that full rational control, e.g. by creating a kind of super-algorithm, will ultimately fail. An approach based on *incrementalism with perspective*, as practiced in relation to the IBA Emscherpark in Germany (Ganser, Siebel, & Sieverts, 1993; Hutter, 2006, referring to Braybrooke&Lindblom), might be more appropriate in such a situation. In short, the perspective is provided by the vision, an imagination of the future, while various institutions take incremental action. Preferred solutions can be found in various spatial constellations, implying that the metropolis should from the start be conceived of as a *transitional* (Ache, 2011) or, in other words – a *soft space* (Haughton, Allmendinger,

Counsell, & Vigar, 2010). Boundaries are not explicitly defined and things tend to be fluid rather than ‘solid state’, providing an opportunity for structures to develop that will lead to the required solutions. Based on such arguments as well as the previous interpretation, this text actually proposes to reverse the argument made by Neuman and Hull (2009): *We can manage, if we can imagine!*

(4) TERRITORIAL RESPONSE CAPACITY

So, how can we mobilise imagination, vision making, and other complementary skills to manage the metropolis? To try to find an answer to this question, the concept of *territorial response capacity* needs to be introduced. This section has a second purpose, which is to outline a research programme for the next years. On one hand, this implies elaborating the academic and critical reflection of phenomena described above. On the other, it implies developing an *action model*, so thinking in very practical terms and following a planner’s bias for hope in the sense used by John Friedmann (2002).

The main elements for such a response capacity can be described as expertise, foresight, norms and strategy (see Figure 8).

Before continuing with the outline, first let us position the themes mentioned so far. The Greater Helsinki Vision exercise clearly falls into the ‘norms’ section. The vision is the attempt to establish a new rule for action. The core element of the competition component falls between the sections ‘expertise’ and ‘foresight’. The more than one hundred teams offered their expert knowledge in discussing and designing possible pathways that could lead towards a sustainable region. They did this by combining expert

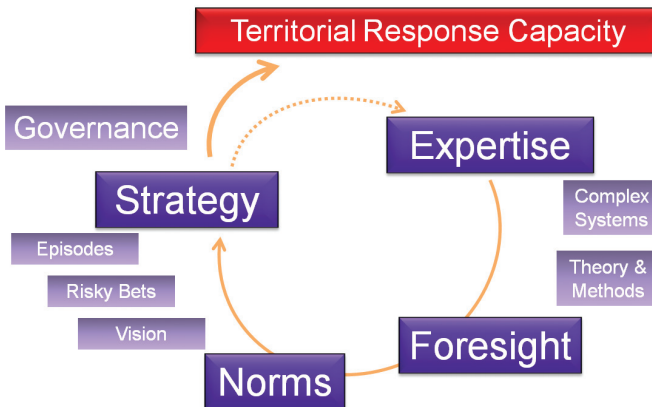


Figure 8. Territorial Response Capacity (Source: Author)

knowledge and reflections of the state of art with a forward-looking dimension. The time horizon was set at 2050 and interim steps had to be outlined. The translation of the vision – in particular the continuation process and the resulting regional planning decisions – falls into the ‘governance’ section. The analytical instrument – the Institutional Analysis and Development Framework – helps understand the interaction between the components related to setting ‘norms’ and those used to define the ‘strategy’.

The main argument for the territorial response capacity is that complex planning settings or environments with many ‘wicked’ problems (Rittel & Webber, 1973) require an approach which is capable of reflecting and accommodating such challenges. An outstanding example of this complexity is provided by the land-use foresight exercise in the United Kingdom (The Government Office for Science, 2010).

The concept of territorial response capacity is mainly based on a procedural approach, allowing the co-evolution of practices (Healey, 2002; Rhodes, 1997, 2007). It depends on some institutional structures, but these are not fixed in a single superstructure¹². On the contrary, a modular idea prevails, keeping the institutional structure flexible and responsive, and also providing different forms of knowledge as well as other resources. The availability of specific functions is more important. These include expertise, foresight and risk management, which can be provided by existing institutions, whether public or private. This territorial response capacity is neither a fixed nor a mechanistic approach, but it should rather be understood as a composition of structures and processes (following Giddens’ *structuration approach*).

This is reflected in planning theory. ‘Can we develop theories and practices of *provisional agnostic pragmatism* which rely less on closure and more on discovery, which reveal potentialities and opportunities and which work with differences and ambiguities?’ (Hillier & Healey, 2008, Bd. 3, xii, referring to Ploeger/Engberg, emphasis added).

In terms of planning practice, which also means in terms of education, some further perspectives can be provided. One of the main professional challenges will be to work out how to build capacity for developing solutions and responses – despite uncertainties – especially regarding future challenges, which we can expect to face but cannot foresee in all their dimensions. As can be seen from the example, the operational side of a vision process strongly depends on actor network constellations. Planning professionals should be able to organize appropriate actions and manage actor constellations, based on their skill in understanding spatial problem situations in their various dimensions and incorporating additional knowledge resources and capacities. However, planning professionals will also need the capacity to develop an understanding of soft planning instruments such as vision making. Practical examples from other European regions can be used as models, such as that already quoted *IBA Emscher Park* in Germany (Hutter, 2006). However, these examples should not simply be copied. Rather they need to be translated into any given action situation, which involves critically reflecting on processes, structures and outcomes and creatively applying the results found in new situations.

And finally, the issues of ‘imagination’ and ‘vision making’ clearly address future perceptions. The Greater Helsinki Vision 2050 used the format of a competition inviting creative – and artistic – views of the future of the region. It even included surprising poetic perspectives, ultimately requiring risk-taking behaviour and strong support to succeed. In that sense, all of these attempts should also be designed to *bring the future into the present*.

(5) THE ‘PRESENCE’ OF THE FUTURE

Delivering this paper at this University creates an opportunity to reflect on vision making with a reference to a well-known religious scholar, Augustine, who lived from 354 to 430 AD. His insights are still interesting more than 1500 years later. Augustine wrote in his *Confessions* (397-401) about the issue of time and the future. Very much a proponent of common sense, Augustine acknowledges that there are three conventional times: past, present, and future. But, at a deeper level he suggests we should correct that perspective with three different forms of a ‘presence’. Augustine speaks about this as “*praesens de praeteritis memoria, praesens de praesentibus contuitus, praesens de futuris expectatio*”. In translation, this means the presence of recollection, the presence of actual perceptions, and the *presence of future expectations*. An exercise such as the Greater Helsinki Vision 2050 competition can be seen as creating a presence of future expectations. Furthermore, these expectations have been captured as ‘ideas’. The word vision bears elements of ‘idea’, having the Greek roots of *to know* and *to see*. So, in principle, having a vision includes having an idea or being able to see, both of which are central to planning! Planning focuses on developing and implementing ideas about the future of spaces and territories. Planners turn their eyes on places and spaces, ‘foreseeing’ spaces, either practically or virtually, either directly or as mediated through plans¹³.

Developing ideas and perspectives is one of the *nice things about planning* (Mastop, see below). This inaugural lecture follows a series of inaugural lectures by my direct predecessors and stands also in that tradition:

Gerrit Wissink spoke in 1962 about the ‘*Taak en toekomst van de planologie*’ and in his valedictory lecture about ‘*De stedeling en ‘zijn’ stad*’ (Wissink, 1962, 1993). Hans Mastop in 1993 addressed ‘*Het aardige van plannen*’ (the nice things about plans, (Mastop, 1993), looking at the capacity of strategy formation and translation of strategies. And Rob Von der Heijden spoke about ‘*ruimte delen, processen maken, so spaces dividing and creating processes*’ (van der Heijden, 2002). Planning clearly has a future but we need to develop new forms and approaches. Planning – especially in the sense of vision making – is enjoyable and creative. Planning certainly integrates spaces into new opportunity structures. And finally, planning certainly involves the search for processes that create *hope* (Friedmann, 2002).

My specific contribution to this line of knowledge (Needham, forthcoming) will centre on the ‘presence of future expectations’ and how these shape our cities, regions,

using the theme of this inaugural lecture: metropolitan spaces. More precisely, the plan is to establish an Urban Futures Lab. This will be an attempt to analyze the developments I have outlined here. The ambition is to search for 'presences of expectations' and how they might create different futures, which present to us the answers we need for complex contemporary problems. This builds on one hand on existing knowledge in other research areas (such as SCAPES), extending it with a specific perspective on futures and future actions. It also links up with recent initiatives by colleagues, such as research on decision-making, the future of services, and European integration. I look forward to introducing my ideas and helping to develop ambitious – and successful – research agendas.

Ik heb gezegd.

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ENDNOTES

- 1 The global information and communication society is often the starting point for those scenarios. Both, P. Veltz and P. Taylor take it as a starting point. Taylor sees dividing lines between *network bourgeoisie*, *knowledge capitalists* establishing a *global plutocracy* and *ordinary* citizens.
- 2 And, given the global dimension, are there alternative paths and learning experiences which we tend to overlook from our Euro-centric perspective? Following e.g. Robinson, J. (2006) *Ordinary Cities: Between Modernity and Development*. Routledge, Milton Park, New York. Robinson identifies the social innovations and processes of capacity building that might provide alternatives to the standard answers that the northern hemisphere tend to produce.
- 3 *Metropolis* by Fritz Lang (1927) has been one of the starting points for my work on our modern metropolis.
- 4 Readers should be aware, that the notion of metropolis (and its variants) does not refer to an established statistical area, as in the USA.
- 5 There is a great deal of ambivalence related to these objects, which I characterise as *transitional*, helping to mediate between inside and outside worlds. In the extremely lively public debate, the metropolis almost becomes a true transitional object (following D.W. Winnicott), providing a safe ground for strategy formulation in times where traditional knowledge of urban forms no longer fits ongoing developments.
- 6 In terms of method, that group was composed of one moderator and six members from different planning institutions, each with a different function. The workshop included two rounds. First, the individuals had to choose a role character to interrelate with a different future living environment. The results were documented, using image decks and other descriptors highlighting good and bad developments in a quite general way. The resulting mental maps were discussed in a group session. Secondly, the same group discussed and evaluated a set of ideas that were generated from the competition entries, in terms of their capacity to respond to societal challenges. In this step, alternative ideas were also generated.
- 7 In this and the next two paragraphs, direct excerpts from working group sessions are given in italic.
- 8 The World Meteorological Organization makes this claim, seeing climate as a resource.
See http://www.wmo.int/pages/mediacentre/infonotes/info_17_en.html
- 9 The OECD provides many studies on the functioning and the strategic potential of metropolitan areas. Those documents influence the local debates quite considerably.
- 10 Which is why the vision would not qualify as a rule *proper*, when for instance applying the IAD syntax (Basurto, Kingsley, McQueen, Smith, & Weible, 2010).
- 11 Le Galès quotes the Italian author Pichierra (1997) and his model of the collective actor: Common interests within the city, and those perceived as such; Collective decision-making; Internal and external representation; Integrating mechanisms, and Capacity for innovation.

- 12 Already in the 1960s Vincent Ostrom called this 'public organization in gargantua', where gargantua denotes the envisioned large-scale metropolitan regions. 'However, gargantua – with its single dominant centre for decision-making – is likely to become a victim of the complexity of its own hierarchical or bureaucratic structure. Its complex channels of communication may make its administration unresponsive to many of the more localized public interests in the community.' (Ostrom, V., C. M. Tiebout, et al. (1961). "The organization of government in metropolitan areas: a theoretical inquiry." *American Political Science Review* 55(4): 831-842, p. 837). Both Vincent Ostrom and Elinor Ostrom are interested in exploring the provision of public goods and services or the management of commons to support a 'preferred state of community affairs'.
- 13 And, in a logical sequence, they also put their hands on land, which is a very established symbolic element in planning, see e.g. the early 'finger plans' for Copenhagen or Hamburg!