

2023 RSA Winter Conference
Cities and Regions of Tomorrow: Towards Better Regional Future

London, UK
9–10 November 2023

**Temporal concepts in urban and regional planning:
Urban narratives, storylines, and policy discourses**

Daniel Galland
Malene Freudendal-Pedersen

*Department of Sustainability and Planning
Aalborg University, Denmark*

Abstract

As a professional field of knowledge, policy and practice, planning has yet to engage with more interpretive, relational, and critical understandings of *time* (Davoudi, 2012; Jensen et al., 2023). Drawing on interpretive policy analysis and political theory, we examine the rhetorical logic and narrative rationality (Fisher, 1994) of contemporary urban policy grounded in temporal concepts (e.g., 15-minute cities, 20-minute neighbourhoods, 30-minute territories). More specifically, we are interested in developing an understanding of the persuasive power (Healey, 2007) of temporal concepts to (i) frame policy discourses in urban planning and governance strategies and (ii) travel worldwide as best policy practices worth of emulation and adaptation (Harris & Moore, 2013; Healey, 2013) while gaining the adherence of political, professional, and lay audiences (Fisher, 1994). Using short illustrative examples from five cities across three continents, we identify converging storylines underpinning urban policy discourses and practices and examine the tropes of naming and forms of rhetorical persuasion (Finlayson, 2012) legitimising temporal concepts as universal and self-evident carriers of urban sustainability values. In dialogue with critical scholarship on current urban sustainability policy debates (Angelo & Wachsmuth, 2020), we reflect on the caveats and limitations of temporal concepts circulating as ‘replicable’ and ‘adaptable’ urban policy solutions to global sustainability problems (Montero, 2020). In conclusion, we draw attention to embedding *situated* urban contingencies (Galland et al., 2023) shaped by historical and socio-cultural context (Davoudi et al., 2020) and ‘everyday life’ perspectives (Freudendal-Pedersen, 2022) in *temporal* urban policy discourses and practices.

Keywords: temporal concepts, policy discourses, urban sustainability, narrative rationality, rhetorical appeals, storylines

References

- Angelo, H., & Wachsmuth, D. (2020). Why does everyone think cities can save the planet? *Urban Studies*, 57(11), 2201–2221.
- Davoudi, S. (2012). The legacy of positivism and the emergence of interpretive tradition in spatial planning. *Regional Studies*, 46(4), 429–441.
- Davoudi, S., Galland, D., & Stead, D. (2020). Reinventing planning and planners: Ideological decontestations and rhetorical appeals. *Planning Theory*, 19(1), 17–37.
- Finlayson, A. (2012). Rhetoric and the political theory of ideologies. *Political Studies*, 60(4), 751–767.
- Fisher, W. R. (1994). Narrative rationality and the logic of scientific discourse. *Argumentation*, 8, 21–32.
- Freudendal-Pedersen, M. (2022). Making Mobilities Matter. In *Making Mobilities Matter*. Routledge.
- Galland, D., Iuel-Stissing, J., & Freudendal-Pedersen, M. (in review). (2023). Planning for urban sustainability: Conceptualising urban contingencies. In M. Freudendal-Pedersen, J. Iuel-Stissing, & D. Galland (Eds.), *Planning for Urban Sustainability: An Urban Contingencies Approach*. Edward Elgar.
- Harris, A., & Moore, S. (2013). Planning histories and practices of circulating urban knowledge. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 37(5), 1499–1509.
- Healey, P. (2007). *Urban Complexity and Spatial Strategies. Towards a Relational Planning for Our Times*. Routledge.
- Healey, P. (2013). Circuits of knowledge and techniques: The transnational flow of planning ideas and practices. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 37, 1510–1536.
- Jensen, M., Galland, D., & Harrison, J. (in review). (2023). The mistreatment of time in planning: Towards planning without the clock in a world out-of-sync. In M. Tewdwr-Jones, P. Allmendinger, & M. Wargent (Eds.), *Critical Planning Futures*. Routledge.
- Montero, S. (2020). Leveraging Bogotá: Sustainable development, global philanthropy and the rise of urban solutionism. *Urban Studies*, 57(11), 2263–2281.