Understanding Strategic Spatial Planning to Effectively Guide Development of Urban Regions

Abstract

Strategic spatial planning is increasingly practised throughout the world to develop a coordinated vision for guiding the medium- to long-term development of urban regions. However, from a theoretical and conceptual perspective, strategic spatial planning is hard to grasp, as it is multidimensional, embedded in sociopolitical and institutional complexity and highly context-dependent. Moreover, current planning debates mainly focus on the outputs of the strategic planning process while largely neglecting the impact that strategic spatial plans can have on urban transformations. Here, we show an empirically-based analytical framework grounded on an analysis of 21 European urban regions, representing the key components of plan-making and plan-implementation as well as the main interrelationships among them. The proposed framework (SPlaMI) reflects current planning practices and intends to contribute towards consolidating a European understanding of strategic spatial planning while providing the basis for dialogue with broader discourses on sustainable development in a global context.

Introduction

Cities and urban regions have become central to ensuring a sustainable future (Rees and Wackernagel, 1996; McPhearson et al., 2016; Acuto, Parnell & Seto, 2018). To address economic, social and environmental issues, strategic spatial planning has been increasingly undertaken at the urban-regional level in Europe since the 1990s (Albrechts, Balducci & Hillier, 2017; Albrechts & Balducci, 2013; Balducci, Fedeli & Pasqui, 2011; Haughton, Allmendinger, Counsell & Vigar, 2010; Albrechts, Healey & Kunzmann, 2003). Although motivations behind embarking on this strategic spatial planning are multifaceted, the common objective has been the identification of a coherent spatial development strategy to frame the medium- and long-term development of urban regions, often in connection with specific strategic urban development projects (Balducci, Fedeli & Pasqui, 2011; Haughton, Allmendinger, Counsell & Vigar, 2010; Albrechts, 2006).

From a theoretical and conceptual point of view, strategic spatial planning is hard to grasp, as it is multidimensional, embedded in sociopolitical and institutional complexity, influenced by power configurations and highly context-dependent. In order to situate this paper in current debates, we refer to the following working definition: strategic spatial planning is the process through which a

variety of public and private actors with a stake in the region such as public-sector planners, politicians, private land holders, and organizations representing community and environmental issues, come together in diverse institutional settings to prepare strategic plans by developing interrelated strategies for the management of spatial change (Albrechts, Balducci & Hillier, 2017; Haughton, Allmendinger, Counsell & Vigar, 2010; Cremer-Schulte; 2014; Newman, 2008).

The analysis of strategic spatial planning processes is a very demanding procedure (Olesen, 2014; Healey, 2007; Flyvbjerg, 2004; Yiftachel, 1994). Furthermore, current knowledge of this process is fragmented; for instance, attention has been mostly paid to governance processes, while little effort has been made to connect these to physical transformations in terms of land cover and land-use change (Schmitt & van Well, 2016). More importantly, comprehensive conceptualizations of strategic spatial planning are also lacking. The latter might be rooted in prevailing methodological approaches: empirical studies on strategic spatial planning typically focus on a single case and rarely on a few of them. As a matter of fact, cross-case comparisons are hardly performed in the literature (Pagliarin, 2018; Elinbaum & Galland, 2016). To the best of our knowledge, studies conducted on larger samples that could increase the evidence base and allow for generalizations are still missing; however it is crucial to gain a better understanding of how strategic spatial planning works.

Strategic spatial planning is composed of plan-making and plan-implementation. Although the two phases sometimes overlap in practice, it is useful to differentiate them for heuristic reasons. The strategic spatial plan-making phase involves the development of visions and decision frameworks with the aim of representing, managing and influencing urban transformations (Albrechts, Balducci & Hillier, 2017). Strategic spatial planning is a social process (Healey, Khakee, Motte & Needham, 2006) through which a range of actors from diverse institutional settings come together to develop strategies and projects for the management of spatial changes (Kunzmann, 2013; Healey, 2009). The final and main output of this phase is usually a plan that stipulates an overall development strategy for the urban region, as well as strategic urban projects. These stipulations are thereafter called planning intentions. In order to be truly strategic, the plans focus on a list of selected themes, (e.g., housing, transportation, green infrastructure), for which they specify a long-term vision and short-term actions (Albrechts & Balducci, 2013). The plan often contains both cartographic representations to visualize the planning intentions, and a written part, which usually describes the socio-economic and ecological context including the challenges posed, presents and justifies the planning intentions and provides guidelines for implementation and monitoring. The visual elements play a crucial role in communication (van Duinen, 2013; Dühr, 2007).

Plan-implementation is the process by which plans are turned into urban transformations, as it fosters the envisioned change and prevents undesired activities and developments (Clifford & Tewdwr-Jones, 2013). In a similar manner to plan-making, plan-implementation is a multifaceted process in which context and mechanisms, availability and access to resources, power and discourse all play an important role (Smith, 2017). Even though plan-implementation is crucial for effective planning, this phase has received remarkably little research attention in the literature on strategic spatial planning, or that on planning evaluation (Pagliarin, 2018; Rudolf, Grădinaru & Hersperger, 2017; Elinbaum & Galland, 2016). However, there seems to be a growing interest in the implementation phase, and recent case studies have explored the conditions behind successfully implemented strategic urban projects (Olesen, 2017; Cassatella, 2013) and stressed the importance of local statutory plans, (e.g., at the municipal level) in implementing strategic plans (Searle, 2017; Mäntysalo, Kangasoja & Kanninen, 2015; Van den Broeck, 2013).

Although we recognize the outstanding importance of contextual specificity in the formulation and implementation of strategic spatial plans, we argue that a comprehensive conceptualization of its main components and interrelationships is nevertheless possible and necessary. In this paper, we synthesize research on 21 European urban regions with diverse national planning systems (Figure 1), to propose an empirically-based analytical framework for strategic spatial plan-making and plan-implementation (abbreviated as the SPlaMI framework, derived from the underlined letters in “Strategic spatial Plan-Making and plan-Implementation”). The framework reflects current planning practices, contributes to the expansion and organization of existing knowledge about strategic planning and makes a step towards the consolidation of an understanding of how planning unfolds and influences urban development in Europe. The SPlaMI framework is thus formulated as an analytical but empirically based framework to support planning researchers in their efforts to generate knowledge on how strategic spatial planning works.

Research Methodology

The SPlaMI framework is based on a multi-case investigation approach. Case studies are an appropriate research strategy for examining the dynamics of a specific territorial and institutional setting (Eisenhardt, 1989). Multi-case designs facilitate an exploration of the differences and similarities within and between cases (Schmitt & van Well, 2016; Yin, 2003).

Case Study Selection

To select the case studies, we followed a two-step procedure. Initially, 35 European urban regions with a strategic spatial plan in force were listed. Then, 21 Western European urban regions were jointly selected by the authors (see Figure 1) based on the following criteria:

- i. Sufficient representation of the range of spatial planning systems, traditions and cultures in Europe (ESPON, 2007; EC, 1997)
- ii. A variety of territorial governance arrangements and institutional settings (Nadin, Smas, Schmitt & Cotella, 2016; Le Galès, 2002)
- iii. A range of times at which strategic spatial planning was introduced at the urban-regional scale, from earlier to more recent
- iv. A variety of visual representations of planning intentions, (e.g., maps or diagrams) included in the plans (Dühr, 2007).

Figure 1. Case studies and the associated planning systems. Source: authors' own elaboration.

Data Collection

Data on the case studies were collected by employing theoretical sampling: a loop-like method which continues until the research reaches a point of saturation and no new information is emerging from the data. Data sources consisted of 96 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with academics and regional planners in the study areas, complemented by an online questionnaire and extensive content

analysis of the strategic spatial plans and supporting material, (e.g., plan-implementation guidelines). The interview questions delved into the territorial governance arrangements, institutional and political settings and the actors' responses to structural conditions linked to the phases of strategic plan-making and plan-implementation. A content analysis of the strategic spatial plans was performed to identify the main planning themes, (e.g., development patterns or housing goals) and the type of spatial information included in the plans (e.g., degree of detail or presence of cartographic visualizations). To optimize time and research resources, a subset of nine urban regions was intensively researched, while other urban regions were analysed by focusing on specific research elements (Table 1). Similar methodological strategies have been shown to be effective in previous studies (Dawson, Elbakidze, Angelstam & Gordon, 2017; Salet & Gualini, 2007; Moulaert, Rodriguez & Swyngedouw, 2003).

Table 1. Focus of investigation in the case studies.

Focus	Cases
Intensively researched cases (focus on all aspects)	Barcelona, Copenhagen, Dublin, Edinburgh, Hannover, Helsinki, Lyon, Milan, Stockholm
Focus on plans	Barcelona, Berlin, Brussels, Copenhagen, Dublin, Edinburgh, Hannover, Helsinki, Lisbon, Lyon, London, Milan, Stockholm, Turin
Focus on projects	Amsterdam, Barcelona, Copenhagen, Hamburg, Lyon, Manchester, Milan, Stockholm, Stuttgart
Focus on governance	Barcelona, Cardiff, Copenhagen, Dublin, Edinburgh, Hamburg, Hanover, Helsinki, Lyon, Milan, Oslo, Stockholm, Stuttgart, Vienna
Focus on external forces	Amsterdam, Barcelona, Copenhagen, Hamburg, Lyon, Manchester, Milan, Stockholm, Stuttgart

Data Analysis

A grounded theory research approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) was adopted to analyse the case studies and identify the key components of plan-making and plan-implementation. Grounded theory is a research methodology which operates inductively and can be used to develop a practical theory from empirical evidence (Allan 2003). This approach appeared to be suited for the aim of this paper. The research involved a constant interplay between data collection and analysis over the period January 2016 to November 2017. Strategic spatial plan-making and plan-implementation were addressed as two separate phases. The key components were identified from the perspective of the following elements: i) governance, ii) planning intentions as expressed in the plans, i.e., the plan's strategy for future urban-regional development and iii) external factors stimulating the regional plan-making and plan-implementation processes (Hersperger et al., 2018).

In addition to the ongoing interplay between data collection and analysis the authors engaged in eight one- to two-day collaborative workshops to synthesise the data into the analytical framework. Following the constant comparison method (Draucker, Martsof, Ross & Rusk, 2007), components that

emerged after a workshop were reassessed in the next workshop. Early workshops focused on selection of case studies and definition of a preliminary set of key components of plan-making and plan-implementation. Subsequent workshops were used to refine and clarify the list of components, as well as their interrelationships, based on the collected data. Excel spread sheets and Word documents were used to code the components, describe them and provide examples from the case studies, while diagram drawings helped to visualize the coding process. As more data was collected, and iteratively re-reviewed, codes were grouped into the components and their interactions displayed. This collaborative process of data analysis helped to structure the components and organize them into an overarching, empirically based framework – the SPLaMI framework. The final two-day workshop was conducted in November 2017 and included a group of five European strategic-planning experts. The discussions lead to a better understanding of planning for mixed land uses, as well as the role of market forces and power relations in urban transformations (Bacău, Schmid & Oliveira, 2018).

The SPLaMI Framework

The SPLaMI framework (Figure 2) illustrates the key components and interrelationships necessary for making and implementing a strategically oriented and realistic strategic spatial plan, as derived from our empirical research. Reading the diagram from left to right, a strategic spatial planning process starts with the plan-making phase rooted in trust building, and leading to the strategic plan as the main output. The process continues with the plan-implementation phase, during which actors and funding are instrumental in realizing the plan through physical changes on the ground, designated here as urban transformations. These two phases often overlap in practice, and sometimes strategic urban projects or objectives discussed in the plan-making phase may have already been partially implemented.

The key components and their relationships have been formulated to represent strategic spatial planning practices through generalisations that go beyond the site-specificity of cases without ignoring their complexity. The framework thus seeks to balance generality and precision across the breadth of components and interactions. It represents the structural relations between the key components by: the relative location of the boxes, the arrows connecting selected boxes, the orientation of arrows, and the implicit timeline from left to right. When one direction dominates, the arrows are oriented (e.g. negotiation oriented to development strategy); more complex relationships are represented by bidirectional arrows (e.g. the bidirectional relation between negotiation and interest groups). The identification of the actor categories followed the literature on strategic spatial planning (e.g. Healey, Khakee, Motte & Needham, 2006) and on territorial governance (ESPON/Nordregio, 2013). Up to now, many of these components have often been examined independently of each other or selectively. The

synthesis of their diversity and interrelationships into a framework helps to bring together different aspects of strategic spatial planning in a way that takes into account the complexity of spatial planning practices in European urban regions. Since strategic planning is a context-dependent endeavour, it is expected that in one urban region certain components and contexts play a more important role than in another. This aspect is omitted in Figure 2 in order to create a generalized and intelligible analytical framework. The next two sections, however, elaborate which components play a central role in our case studies.

Figure 2. The SPLaMI framework: plan-making (left side) and plan-implementation (right side) phases. Reading the diagram from left to right, a strategic spatial planning process unfolds along an imagined timeline and starts with the plan-making phase which leads to a plan as a main process-related output, among other things. The process continues with the plan-implementation phase, where the planned projects and development strategies get realized, resulting in urban transformations. Source: authors’ own elaboration.

Plan-Making Phase

The left side of the SPLaMI framework (Figure 2) shows the main components of the plan-making phase and illustrates the multiple interrelationships between these components. The figure is complemented by Table 2. The description refers to examples drawn from the case studies and is organized as follows. First, we focus on leadership (orange ellipse) and negotiation (pink ellipse), as both components play a central role in plan-making across the urban regions assessed. Secondly, we address consensus-building amid conflict, and the actors involved, i.e., experts, citizens and interest groups, as well as the importance of a consolidated planning practice in plan-making (all in blue rectangles). Thirdly, we focus on how plan-making is as much about coordination (blue line) as it is about trust (grey frame). Fourthly, we focus on the content of strategic spatial plans (light-pink ellipse) in terms of development strategy and strategic urban projects (both yellow ellipses).

Table 2. Main components and interrelationships of the strategic spatial plan-making phase as outlined in Figure 2.

Component	Description of component and main interrelationships
Leadership in plan-making	Leadership is about oversight, vision and the ability to secure the participation of all relevant actors. It aids negotiations involving various actors, coordinates the plan-making process and can directly influence the content of a development strategy or give rise to new strategic urban projects.

Negotiation in plan-making	Negotiation is the process of setting up priorities as it identifies key land uses by balancing public and private interests. Negotiation is supported by a process of consensus-building and involves leadership, interest groups and expert knowledge. These actors come together to negotiate on various economic, social and environmental 'objects of negotiation'. Negotiation can directly influence the content of a development strategy or result in new strategic urban projects.
Consensus amid conflict	Consensus-building is a process that incorporates the interests and perspectives of interest groups, experts and civic society, which together coordinate their decision-making in a search for common ground amid and beyond conflicts. It often precedes negotiation.
Expert knowledge	Expert knowledge supports plan-making and is provided by experts (academic and non-academic) from different fields of research. Experts often directly participate in negotiations and support consensus-building.
Civic participation	Civic participation (or citizens' involvement) refers to the involvement and active participation of citizens through analogue or electronic means, (e.g., social media). Civic participation is linked directly to finding consensus amid conflict.
Interest groups	Interest groups are groups formally or informally constituted. They are an inherent part of the process because they pursue their own stakes in the plan-making process. Interest groups can be directly involved in negotiations and they also influence consensus-building.
Consolidated planning practice	Consolidated planning practice is the experience in dealing with strategic spatial planning at the urban-region level; a consolidated planning practice strongly facilitates consensus-building.
Coordination	Coordination is a process of a purposeful and collaborative alignment of the interests and perspectives of public entities and private interests. Coordination supports the interrelationship between negotiation and consensus-building.
Trust	Trust is a necessary support condition for leadership, negotiation and consensus-building. Trust is strongly interrelated with leadership and the overall planning process.
Planning legislation	Planning legislation can determine the issues a plan has to address and thus can influence development strategies.
Events	Events are occurrences that are triggered by out-of-the-region factors such as decisions by international bodies on locations for sport and cultural celebration. Events can have a considerable impact on negotiations and can directly stimulate new strategic urban projects.
National government	Some decisions by the national government are binding and can thus directly influence the development of strategic urban projects.
Development strategy	A development strategy frames the medium- and long-term development of urban regions. A development strategy is shaped by the outcomes of a negotiation process, leadership and planning legislation. The content of a development strategy 'fuels' the content of the strategic spatial plan.
Strategic urban projects	Strategic urban projects are a fast-track plan-implementation approach to ensure that spatial transformation happens on the ground in key strategic domains. These projects can be directly influenced by events, national government decision-making, leadership and negotiations. Positioning strategies, i.e., strategies supporting an urban region in spotlighting their strategic domains, such as a strong financial sector, good tourism infrastructure or high-quality educational facilities, often initiate the development of strategic urban projects.
Strategic spatial plan	A strategic spatial plan is the final output of the plan-making phase. It is a written document which often contains cartographic representations for visualizing the intended developments.

Source: authors' own elaboration.

Leadership, understood here as the ability of a public entity to guide the strategic spatial planning process at the urban-regional level, is required to effectively organize a negotiation process. Strong leadership facilitates the formulation of a development strategy and strategic urban projects. The leadership can rest in different settings or institutional contexts and in a given case, for example, a political leader, a spatial planning department or a specially established office can lead spatial planning processes. In Oslo-Akershus, for instance, the plan-making process was characterized by sustained coordination efforts among municipalities. A joint office composed of representatives from Oslo and Akershus County Councils guided the entire preparation of the Regional Plan for Land Use and Transport 2015. Our findings reveal that this joint office played, through its leadership, a decisive role in introducing compact urban development and efficient commuting into the plan for this Norwegian urban region. In Hannover, which is embedded in more formal governance structures than Oslo-Akershus, the Region Hannover with a directly elected regional parliament played the leading role in coordinating the plan-making process.

Negotiation is a process by which spatial principles, land-use claims and planning intentions are debated in an effort to agree on jointly produced outcomes, such as a development strategy or strategic urban projects (cf. Ruming, 2012). A negotiation process normally covers a number of 'objects of negotiation'. These issues are pressing domains in urban regions, such as economic activities, competitive positioning, housing needs, environmental conservation, social issues and transportation. In negotiation processes, the goals and perspectives of interest groups such as chambers of commerce, environmental NGOs, transport associations and cultural groups, as well as the claims of citizens, are deliberated in the light of expert knowledge. For example, plan-making in Greater Copenhagen in Denmark is the result of a combination of a bottom-up and a top-down approach to strategic planning at urban-regional level. Joint decision-making between the Danish Business Authority and the municipalities composing Greater Copenhagen is a primary practice. The municipalities played a key role in the preparation of the Finger Plan 2015, a strategic plan for the development of the Copenhagen urban region, by proposing the allocation of transportation infrastructures and improvements to the public parks network, as well as demanding more land for housing and economic activities. The meetings with municipalities entailed negotiations on the issues to include in the Finger Plan and the issues to omit. In the Scottish urban region of Edinburgh, negotiations between local governments and private interest groups, mainly from the housing and transportation sectors, were paramount during the preparation phase of the Strategic Development Plan for Edinburgh and South East Scotland 2016. These negotiations are a give-and-take exercise in which private interest groups such as housing developers demand land for a new housing settlement and public entities request their support in infrastructure provision.

Consensus-building amid conflict supports, and ideally precedes, negotiation. It involves the region's experts from universities and research centres, (i.e., expert knowledge), citizens, (i.e., civic participation) and interest groups and can benefit from a consolidated planning practice. Consensus-building has been a key aspect of successful plan-making in the Helsinki-Uusimaa urban region. In Region Hannover, the preparation of the Regional Spatial Planning Programme 2016 involved consensus-building on, for example, retail matters and housing developments, between environmental protection NGOs, citizens (via workshops for example) and expert knowledge.

Expert knowledge contributes to scientifically-informed decisions, innovation and experimentation in plan-making. To determine the ecological value of certain areas in the Helsinki-Uusimaa urban region, for instance, the University of Helsinki was asked several times to share knowledge and provide input on green infrastructures and intraregional transportation issues. In Copenhagen and Stuttgart, experts have been mainly involved in matters regarding landscape conservation and natural resources protection.

Civic participation is needed for a broad acceptance of the plan. Social media platforms and other tools greatly support widespread civic engagement in some of the case studies. For instance, the Regional Plan for Land Use and Transport in Oslo and Akershus 2015 is the result of coordination efforts among municipalities; this includes not only the participation of trade unions and environmental protection organizations but also citizens' involvement, individually or through grass-roots movements.

Consolidated planning practice, understood as the experience and expertise of actors in an urban region in dealing with strategic spatial planning, also influences strategic plan-making and is especially valuable for the process of consensus-building. A consolidated planning practice is clearly visible in the Nordic and German cases, as they pursue strategic spatial planning as a continuous learning and improvement process. For example, the above-mentioned Finger Plan for Greater Copenhagen has been world-renowned since 1947 and strategic regional planning has been carried out in the Stockholm region since 1952. Likewise, the Verband Region Stuttgart has been responsible for regional planning since its foundation in 1994. These urban regions have been dealing with strategic spatial planning at the urban-regional level for some decades, leading to a consolidated practice.

Coordination, often a key task of leadership, strengthens the interrelations between negotiation and consensus-building. For example, in Cardiff urban region, the coordination of the municipalities supported regional decision-making processes. The involvement of various actors at the urban-regional level, such as housing developers or Natural Resources Wales was also identified as a key aspect of Cardiff's strategic plan-making quest. In the Italian case of Milan, coordination between *Città Metropolitana di Milano* and municipalities was central to the whole practice of strategic spatial plan-

making at the urban-regional level. In order to provide inputs to the strategic plan, municipalities interacted with local interest groups to take into account their demands.

Trust refers to the confidence relevant actors have in the strategic spatial plan-making process and procedures. Within an arena of open and hidden agendas and power relations, trust strengthens the role of the leadership in the overall planning process. It is an important component for securing fluid negotiations and for consensus-building, i.e., overcoming conflicts between public and private actors. In Oslo-Akershus urban region, for instance, negotiation benefits from a solid trust among the entities involved. There is trust that negotiations among the Oslo City Council, Akershus County Council and private interest groups located in this urban region will continue until all are confident that their interests are taken into consideration.

The final output of the strategic spatial plan-making phase is a strategic spatial plan that contains a development strategy and/or strategic urban projects. The development strategy might refer to the densification of residential areas, the development of employment districts or the delineation of zones for environmental protection and the preservation of cultural heritage. For instance, the Stockholm RUFSS strategic and development plan envisions eight sub-centres for urban growth to rebalance the more developed northern and less developed southern parts of the Stockholm urban region. Strategic urban projects greatly varied in size in our sample of urban regions and included, for example, the redevelopment of railway stations (Stuttgart, Milan, Helsinki-Uusimaa, Vienna), the construction of key transportation infrastructures (Barcelona, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Amsterdam) and the strengthening of economic poles, such as Central Business Districts (CBDs) or exhibition centres (Amsterdam, Lyon, Manchester, Stuttgart).

The content of the plan is strongly influenced by leadership and negotiation. The SPLaMI framework also shows that planning legislation can directly influence the plan, for example in terms of the formal structure of the strategic plan and the spatial precision of cartographic visualizations. In the case of London, the Greater London Authority Act 1999 establishes that transportation, housing and environmental aspects should be included among the policy themes and that the plan should contain 'diagrams, illustrations or other descriptive or explanatory matter relating to its contents'. In the case of German urban regions, the legal basis for approving a strategic regional plan is the Ordinance on Territorial Planning, which defines the policy themes. Strategic spatial projects can be further influenced by events originating outside urban regions, and by national government decision-making, particularly in the form of funding. Location decisions made by the International Olympic Committee (a supra-regional organization) and other national- and international-level sporting and cultural organizations are examples of such events. A well-known example is the 1990 strategic plan for

Barcelona. The selection of Barcelona to host the 1992 Summer Olympic Games stimulated actors to embark, in the mid-1980s, on a process of strategic plan-making under the auspices of the political leadership of the then mayor, Pascual Maragall (García, 2003). The plan-making process served as a platform for negotiation among various interest groups and the 1990 strategic plan was used to reach a consensus over the strategic issues to be realized for and beyond the Olympics.

Overall, current strategic spatial plan-making practices are characterized by negotiations involving the participation of a wide range of interest groups, representing mainly economic interests but also environmental preoccupations. This is transversal to the 21 case studies. In line with Oliveira and Hersperger (2018b) we acknowledge that negotiations during the plan-making phase are embedded in power configurations. The SPLaMI framework thus accommodates real estate developers and business representatives as well as environmental advocacy groups that can directly enter the negotiation process. While some authors are critical of the involvement of economic interests in the realm of strategic spatial planning (Olesen, 2014), other scholars contend that the involvement of various groups in the strategic plan-making processes can provide planners with a tool that can effectively contribute to stronger plans that are more likely to be implemented in reality (Burby, 2003). In this respect, Albrechts (2006) asserts that interest groups possess valuable substantive and procedural competencies, and that their participation in strategic spatial plan-making processes helps to legitimize the contents of the plan. The tight interrelationships between the components of the plan-making phase help to overcome issues of legitimacy and transparency if all those representing different interests are involved.

It is important to emphasize that these components of the plan-making phase are not exclusive. We acknowledge that in other urban regions, under various political, economic and social conditions and embedded in a context-specific spatial planning system, other components and interrelationships might emerge during strategic spatial plan-making.

Plan-Implementation Phase

The right side of Figure 2 illustrates the main components of the plan-implementation phase and a selection of the multiple interrelationships between governance actors and components. Many have been omitted for purposes of readability. Table 3 complements the figure. In our framework, the plan-implementation phase ideally starts after the strategic spatial plan has been approved, although – as mentioned above – we are aware this is a simplification. Drawing from our empirical research, we describe the components as follows. First, we address the role of the legal framework (grey frame) and of funding (blue line), since these are necessary components that sustain the process of plan-implementation. Secondly, we discuss the various roles of the main actors involved in the process (green line and yellow ellipses), whose multiple interactions affect the implementation of planning intentions (burgundy ellipse). In the plan-implementation phase, actors' interactions are mainly addressed in terms of negotiation (fuchsia ellipse), leadership (orange ellipse), political consensus and cooperation (both blue ellipses). Finally, we consider the role of external events (light-blue ellipse) in affecting the implementation of the strategic plan.

Table 3. Main components and interrelationships of the strategic spatial plan-making phase as outlined in Figure 2.

Component	Description of component and main interrelationships
Legal framework	The legal framework affects how the strategic plan is implemented locally. The more binding the strategic plan, the more consistently local plans will sustain the urban transformations envisioned in the strategic spatial plan. In the implementation phase, the legal framework is related to funding and can shape planning intentions.
Funding	Funding is a crucial component for plan implementation, as it refers to the process of securing financial resources for all aspects of implementation. Funds often come from a combination of sources (represented by the actors in Figure 2) and are established in intense negotiation and cooperation processes. Political leadership at different governmental levels can be decisive in attracting and securing funding.
Actors	National governments, as well as regional and local authorities, negotiate and cooperate with private actors for plan implementation. Representatives of other interests can participate, resist or even disrupt the implementation process. This is particularly true in the context of controversial strategic urban projects. Political consensus facilitates actors' interactions in negotiation and cooperation processes.
Planning intentions	Planning intentions refer to the plan content in terms of development strategy and strategic urban projects.
Negotiation in implementation	In implementing the strategic spatial plan, actors negotiate on how funding and planning intentions can be reconciled. Negotiation is a necessary part of collective decision-making and typically unfolds on many levels, from the very concrete to the general. It can, for example, be structured in public-private partnerships or conflict resolution processes. Special attention needs to be given to hidden agendas and exclusion practices. Political leadership and consensus can facilitate negotiation.

Leadership in plan-implementation	Leadership refers to the key role and recognized reputation of a politician in prioritizing planning intentions, securing funding, creating political consensus among actors and facilitating cooperation and negotiation.
Political consensus	Political consensus refers to a solid cross-party agreement on the development strategy and strategic urban projects to be realized. Generally, political consensus ensures that commitment to plan implementation, particularly in terms of funding, is maintained after elections or changes in political and institutional scenarios. Political consensus is reinforced by the leadership of a respected and charismatic political leader.
Cooperation	Cooperation refers to actors' combined efforts in maintaining their commitment to the implementation of the planning intentions. Cooperation also involves actors' attitudes to overcoming conflicts and resistances. Political consensus and leadership can facilitate cooperation.
Events	Events refer to unexpected (inter)national happenings that trigger local/regional actors to prioritize or modify the implementation of a certain development strategy or strategic urban project. A response to events often requires the cooperation of many actors to gather the necessary financial resources. In general, events are favourable when they stimulate the release of funds, and unfavourable otherwise.
Urban transformation	Urban transformation refers to physical transformations in the urban region in terms of land cover and land use. An urban transformation can be observed when the development strategy and the strategic urban projects are actually implemented, i.e., when planning intentions are realized.

Source: authors' own elaboration.

The legal framework is one of the most decisive components during the plan-implementation phase. In short, the more binding the strategic plan, the more consistently local plans will sustain the urban transformations envisioned in the strategic spatial plan. For example, the Stuttgart Regional Plan, issued in 1997 and updated in 2009, contains a guideline for strategic development, but also links the spatial planning framework at the *Land* level (Baden-Württemberg) with local plans: the Stuttgart regional plan is binding for local authorities, but it is issued only after a consultation and negotiation process with local authorities has been completed (see above: plan-making phase). In contrast, the exclusive strategic character of the plan as a development guideline and as a platform for discussion, as in the case of Barcelona, supports local plans but does not steer them substantially.

A second decisive component is funding. The role of funding mechanisms in plan-implementation has been increasing, mainly due to a scarcity of overall financial resources available in the public domain following recent financial and economic uncertainty (Oliveira & Hersperger, 2018a). Funding, or the setting up of funding mechanisms, is a complex process in itself and involves a myriad of actors. Of course, the respective roles and the importance of the involved actors vary greatly from one implementation process to another, and sometimes from one urban region to another. During plan-implementation, actors from the public and private sectors may modify previous agreements on funding sources, hence exerting an indirect influence on physical transformations and on their

adherence to the plan's development strategy. Notably, the funding of strategic urban projects is often highly controversial, and the adoption of a critical perspective can help to disclose unbalanced agreements, hidden agendas and the exclusion of certain interests in favour of others (Moulaert, Rodriguez & Swyngedouw, 2003; Swyngedouw, Moulaert & Rodriguez, 2002; Logan & Molotch, 1987).

Public entities, private investors and representatives of other interest groups are the prime actors during the plan-implementation phase and are directly linked to funding, as can be seen by their position in Figure 2. Public actors and private investors can have a considerable influence on the realization of strategic urban projects, especially when these projects remain strategically prominent beyond the urban region in which they are to be implemented, (e.g., waterfront redevelopment). The key actors in the public sector are national, regional and local governments. An example where the role of the regional authority is particularly important is Stuttgart's *Verband Region*. Its elective character and its key competencies in transport infrastructures make the *Verband Region* a crucial player in the definition and funding of transport policies, which are included in the regional strategic and land-use plans issued by the Stuttgart regional authority. In turn, the case of Copenhagen Ørestad is illustrative of the key role played by the national government in financially supporting the implementation of this new district (Knowles, 2012). Although not originally included in the Greater Copenhagen Finger Plan, Ørestad was conceived to form the 'thumb' of the Finger Plan's 'hand'. To turn the tide in Copenhagen, which was at the edge of bankruptcy by the end of the 1980s, the Danish State and the city of Copenhagen cooperated and formed a publicly owned, but privately managed, agency (*By & Havn*, City & Port) to act as a promoter for the new development that would occur in Ørestad. However, as private investment did not appear within the expected time, the Danish State acted as a developer: a university building and state-owned radio and TV studios were located in the upper part of Ørestad. Without the support of the Danish State, the development of the 'thumb' of the Finger Plan would have been much deferred.

Private-sector actors often include representatives of for-profit organizations such as retail companies, real estate developers and investors. Again, in the case of Copenhagen Ørestad, the first private investor to locate in the area was a large Norwegian stakeholder owning a chain of shopping malls. An exemption from the government was necessary, however, to concede the shopping mall's owner a larger surface than is legally allowed in Denmark. Another example is the transformation of Porta Nuova-Garibaldi-Repubblica in Milan. In the 1953 local land-use plan of Milan, the area was already identified as a CBD. However, the project never took off and the area became run-down and shunned, despite its central location. Over time, other attempts were made to relaunch the area, but these were unsuccessful. The turning point was when, in the mid-2000s, international and national stakeholders,

(i.e., banks, foreign private investors and funders) took an interest in the area and proposed to the Milan city council a new type of project: building a new CBD with skyscrapers; a complete novelty for the Milanese. The redevelopment of the area took off when the 2006 strategic spatial plan of Milan was issued, even though it is linked to it in only a limited way. However, thanks to the prominent role of private actors, the latest 2016 strategic spatial plan reconfirms the strategic character of this new centrality in the overall comprehensive spatial strategy for the Milan urban region.

These cases show the relevance of negotiation and cooperation for the implementation of the strategic plan. It is during negotiations that the spatial intentions (see Figure 2) are linked with funding and that details regarding the land-use mix and the scope of strategic urban projects are determined. Furthermore, as it often takes years to implement a development strategy or a strategic urban project, cooperation is essential for maintaining commitment over time. For instance, the relocation and expansion of the Milan trade fair involved skilful negotiations among the newly established, publicly owned but privately managed, trade-fair agency (*Ente Fondazione Fiera*), the Milan city council, the Lombardy regional government and the Italian State. The relocation of the fair, strongly supported by the Lombardy regional government, implied the regeneration of (and hence rent-extraction from) the old facility and the completion of transport infrastructures along the north-west axis of the Milan urban region. Cooperation among the actors was crucial for the implementation phase. Again, in the example of Copenhagen Ørestad, the cooperation between the Danish State and the city of Copenhagen was a key element in sustaining the coherence and commitment necessary to implement Ørestad (although the initial detailed master plan was occasionally amended).

Another example, the renovation and expansion of the logistics hub of Barcelona in the mid-1990s, experienced tenacious resistance from civil society that was overcome in negotiation and cooperation processes. The mayor of El Prat municipality, where the planned expansion of the logistics hub should have taken place, together with environmental groups, protested against this expansion. The strong resistance was also fuelled by the fact that the renovation of the Barcelona logistics hub was part of a more comprehensive strategy to redevelop the port and expand the airport, with large negative impacts on the surroundings and the inhabitants of the El Prat municipality. Eventually, the opposing parties successfully negotiated with the Barcelona municipality, the Catalanian regional government and the Spanish State to maintain and protect the ecological habitat of the Llobregat river delta. The original development plan for the logistics hub was hence implemented in a modified version to safeguard environmental quality. This result was also attained thanks to the actors' cooperative attitude and willingness to overcome this conflict and find a satisfactory solution. However, our empirical research confirms that powerful representatives of other interests, such as housebuilders,

possess a greater capacity to influence decision-making in the plan-implementation process than do environmental NGOs or citizen-led movements.

A broad political consensus among the key actors, as well as the presence of a key political person whose leadership is recognized, can strengthen the coherence of plan-implementation over time, fostering an urban transformation in accordance with planning intentions. For instance, in the case of Lyon, the strategic (re)development of the Confluence district has been strongly linked to the political figures of the latest Lyon mayors. The predecessor of Mayor Gérard Collomb, Raymond Barre, had already envisioned the redevelopment of this area; a commitment that was maintained by his successor. Our fieldwork has also shown that urban policies in Lyon are very much supported by a strong cross-party political consensus where decisions taken by the previous city council are generally maintained. A similar illustration is again Milan Porta Nuova-Garibaldi-Repubblica, where the left-wing Milan city council elected in 2012 maintained the commitment of the previous right-wing council to realize this strategic project. Leadership also plays a role in the setting up and identifying of funding mechanisms. In the case of Lyon Part-Dieu, the proactive role of Mayor Collomb in securing investment in Lyon's CBD was central.

The proposed analytical framework also highlights the fact that unexpected events, such as political instability or natural disasters, can have a considerable impact on cooperation and negotiation processes. For instance, after the German reunification process started in the early 1990s, the US military released their local airfield in the Stuttgart urban region. A cooperation process began among the five villages forming Ostfildern municipality where the airfield was located, which resulted in the development of Scharnhauser Park (Jessen, 2005). This is a mixed-use area at the gates of Stuttgart, characterized by a high landscape quality – thanks to an advanced competition-winning landscape planning project – and served by public transport. Again, in the case of Stuttgart, the establishment of the Stuttgart regional authority (*Verband Region*) in 1994 was a reaction to the economic crisis of the early 1990s and the German reunification process. Both events were perceived as highly destabilizing by the *Land* level of Baden-Württemberg and the Stuttgart city council. To help coordinate efforts to secure the economic competitiveness of the region, the Stuttgart regional authority had been given competencies on transport infrastructures – as a key area of planning intentions – which were included as development strategies in the regional strategic and land-use plans.

Discussion and Conclusions

The empirically based SPLaMI framework facilitates future reflections on the workings of strategic spatial planning. It is a flexible tool and can serve as a starting point for much-needed comparative research. For example, a researcher that designs a study on the role of actors in negotiating the content of strategic spatial plans in practice can use this analytical framework to situate her/his research within the planning process. Furthermore, recent studies suggest that strategic spatial plan-making processes are framed and shaped by place-based governance configurations; thus knowing these components helps to understand how private actors' interests influence the definition of development strategies (Oliveira & Hersperger, 2018b). A researcher developing a cross-case comparison on these issues can support the systematic identification of potentially crucial interactions with the framework. In addition, planning researchers could use this analytical framework in their quest to explaining how strategic spatial plans are implemented. The framework could aid in scrutinizing who is involved in negotiations (i.e. experts, citizens, private interest groups) and what is negotiated (e.g. economic activities, housing needs, transportation etc.) as well as which external, contingent factors might affect the plan-making and implementation phases. This is in line with Oliveira and Hersperger (2018a), who reason that to understand truly strategic planning practices is important to know who benefits and who loses during negotiations, and how plan implementation decisions are actually made. Further studies should also focus on the framework's generalization potential by testing it in non-European contexts.

While it is acknowledged that strategic spatial planning can play a crucial role in sustainable development, one needs to be aware that strategic spatial planning is a topic of intense debate. Critical planning scholarship describes plan-implementation through strategic urban projects as the expression of a neo-liberal agenda that stimulates urban actors to adopt a more entrepreneurial style of planning (Moulaert, Rodriguez & Swyngedouw, 2003; Swyngedouw, Moulaert & Rodriguez, 2002; Harvey, 1989) but it also highlights the transformative and empowering potential of strategic spatial planning (Eisenhardt, 1989). These critical views are valid, and it is necessary to devote research and action to them. The SPLaMI framework pursues a non-normative understanding of planning analysis, that is, an understanding that spatial planning is a context-based process that can be studied without normative assumptions, even when normativity enters the picture again later on. Our analytical framework is thus compatible with critical and normative orientations in strategic spatial planning and is expected to support research efforts and actions in both.

Besides the well-known governance capacity strategic spatial plans can stimulate among actors (Mastrop and Faludi 1997; Faludi 2000) our empirical research supports theoretical propositions that

'the plan' holds a central position in strategic spatial planning (Boyer & Hopkins, 2018; Lai, 2018; Hopkins, 2014). The fact that most plans are regularly updated can be interpreted as a sign of their significance. Furthermore, we found that plans can play a strong role in the process of plan-implementation if they support coordination between regional and local governments and serve as a reference point for decisions taken at the local level. A combination of development strategies and strategic urban projects is a key characteristic of strategic spatial planning in most of the studied urban regions, with projects often providing the link with plan-implementation. These projects are more visible and tangible than development strategies and are thus often preferred by investors. Furthermore, our empirical research supports the current theoretical debates surrounding the role of consolidated planning practices (Healey, 2009; Healey, 2013; Vettoretto, 2009). Although our selection of case studies recognized the potential influence of planning systems, we found it easy to generalize across urban regions situated in different planning cultures (ESPON, 2007; EC, 1997). The 21 urban regions seem to converge in terms of components, interactions and planning themes, whereas they vary mainly in terms of the importance accorded to the components and the strength of the interactions.

The generalization of the SPaMI framework is the result of the work of an interdisciplinary research team who devoted attention to all the case studies, in contrast to many research projects where specific case studies are examined by individual researchers. This procedure gives us confidence in the proposed, empirically-based analytical framework. Other research teams in highly interdisciplinary research fields might benefit from following this procedure.

Acuto, Parnell, & Seto, 2018) recently called for a global urban science that reaches across academia, meets pressing sustainability challenges and enables more effective science-policy interfaces. Reflections on the workings of strategic spatial planning as presented here, paired with an evaluation of existing planning processes, are expected to lead to a better understanding of how plan-making and plan-implementation influence urban transformation in the pursuit of a more sustainable environment for cities and urban regions.

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