

# Problems and Pitfalls in Large-Scale Strategic Planning

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**Un Progetto Strategico per la Regione Urbana  
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# Outline

- ❑ **Challenges and developments**
- ❑ **Strategic planning: What? How?**
- ❑ **Macro-structure of the process**
- ❑ **Imagining**
- ❑ **Shifting boundaries**
- ❑ **Governance**
- ❑ **Strategic urban projects**
- ❑ **Institution building**
- ❑ **Metaphors**



# Challenges and developments

- ❑ **The growing complexity (rise of new technologies, changes in production process, crisis of representative democracy, globalization of culture and the economy),**
- ❑ **an increasing concern about the rapid and apparently random development,**
- ❑ **the problems of fragmentation, the dramatic increase in interest (at all scales, from local to global) in environmental issues,**
- ❑ **the need for governments to adopt a more entrepreneurial style of planning in order to enhance city competitiveness,**
- ❑ **a longstanding quest for better coordination -horizontal and vertical-,**
- ❑ **a re-emphasis on the need for long-term thinking**
- ❑ **in addition to the traditional land use regulation, urban maintenance, production and management of services governments are called to answer new demands,**
- ❑ **a number of planning concepts -compact city, liveable cities- cannot be achieved solely through physical hard planning**



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# Strategic Planning

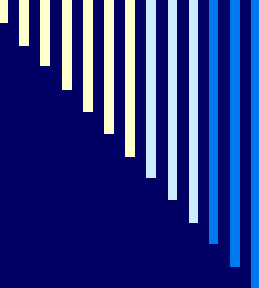
## What?

**Strategic spatial planning is a transformative and integrative, (preferably) public sector led socio-spatial process through which a vision, coherent actions and means for implementation are produced that shape and frame, what a place is and might become.**



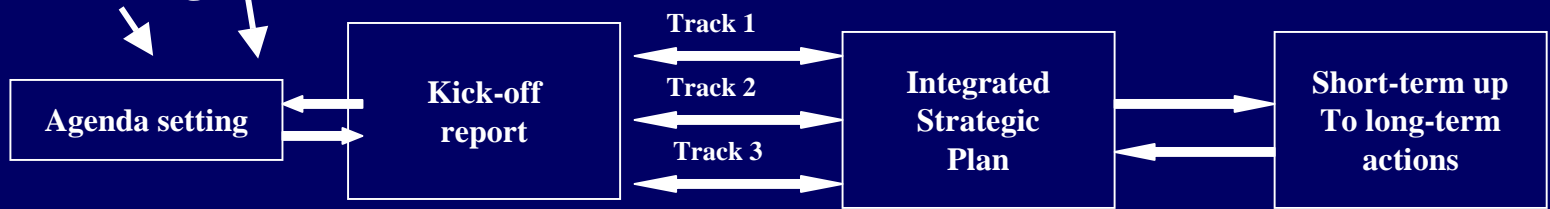
# How?

- It focuses on a limited number of strategic key issue areas,
- it takes a critical view of the environment in terms of determining strengths and weaknesses in the context of opportunities and threats,
- it studies the external trends, forces and resources available
- It identifies and gathers major actors (public and private),
- it allows for a broad (multi-level governance) and diverse (public, economic, civil society) involvement during the planning process,

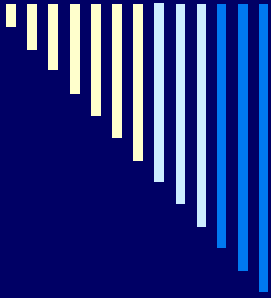
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- **it creates solid, workable long-term visions/perspectives (a geography of the unknown) and strategies at different levels taking into account the power structures -political, economic, gender, cultural-, uncertainties and competing values**
  - **It designs plan-making structures and develops content, images and decision frameworks for influencing and managing spatial change,**
  - **it is about building new ideas and processes that can carry them forward, thus generating ways of understanding, ways of building agreements, and ways of organizing and mobilizing for the purpose of exerting influence in different arenas**
  - **it focuses, both in the short and the long term, on framing decisions, actions, projects, results and implementation and incorporates monitoring, feedback, adjustment and revision**

# Macro-structure for the overall strategic planning process.

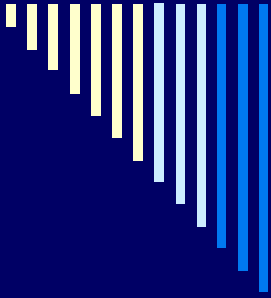
- specific problems
- Challenges



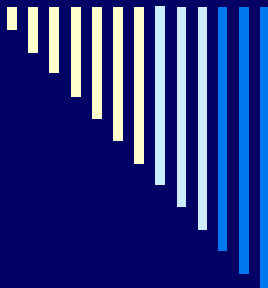
Track 4

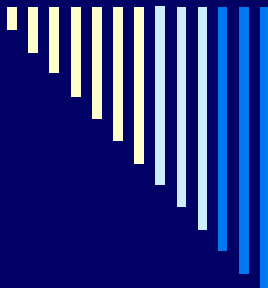


- In the first track the emphasis is on the long-term vision. The vision is constructed in relation to the social values to which a particular environment is historically committed. The creation of a vision is a conscious and purposive action to represent values and meanings for the future.**

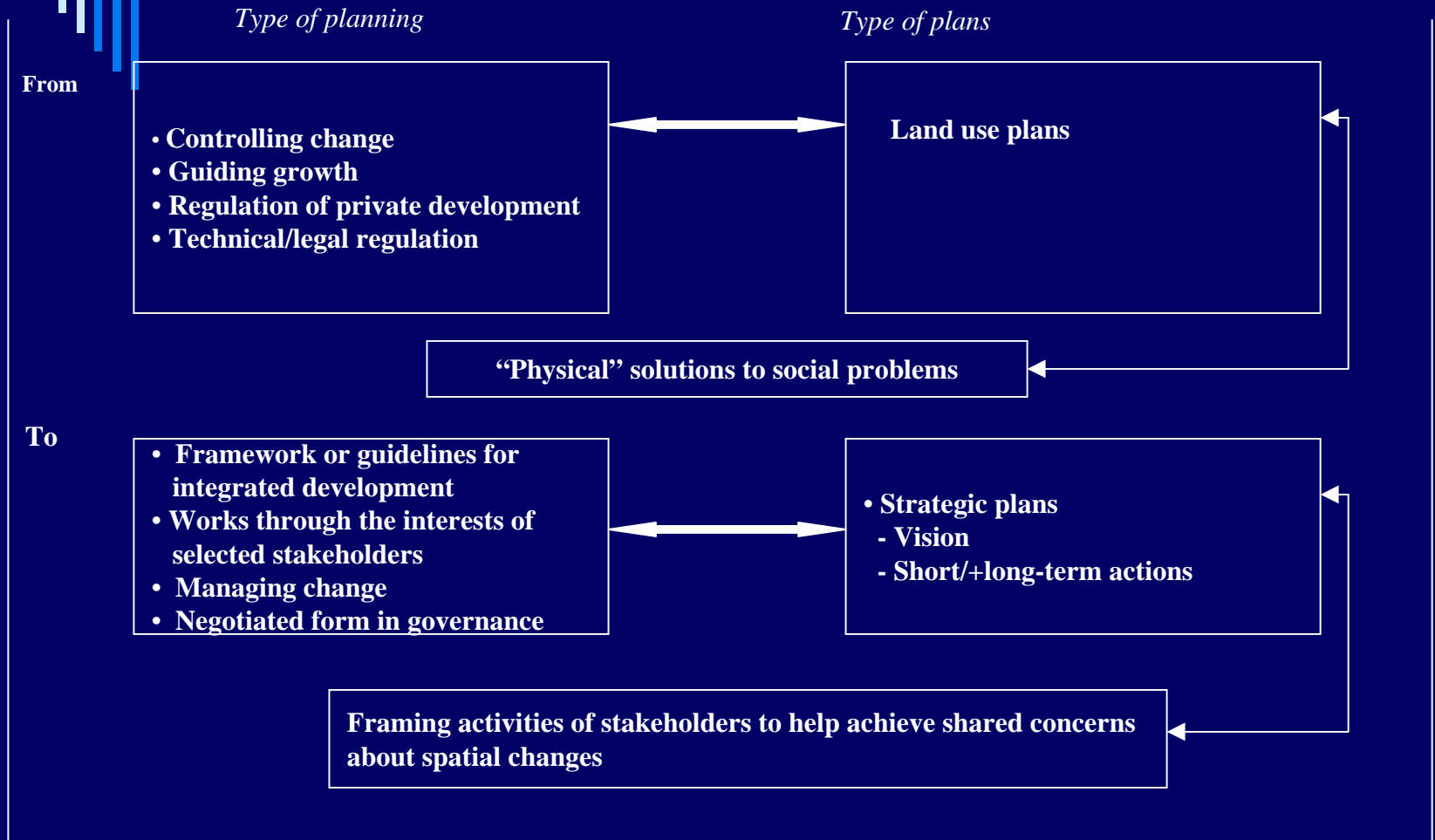


- **Track 2: short term actions. Concerns acting in such a way as to make the future conform to the vision constructed in track 1 and to tackle problems in view of this vision.**

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- **Track 3 involves relevant actors needed for their substantive contribution, their procedural competences and the role they might play in acceptance, in getting basic support and in providing legitimacy. Both the technical skills and the power to allocate sufficient means to implement proposed actions are usually spread over a number of diverse sectors, actors and departments. Integration in its three dimensions – substantive, organizational and instrumental (legal, budget) – is at stake here.**

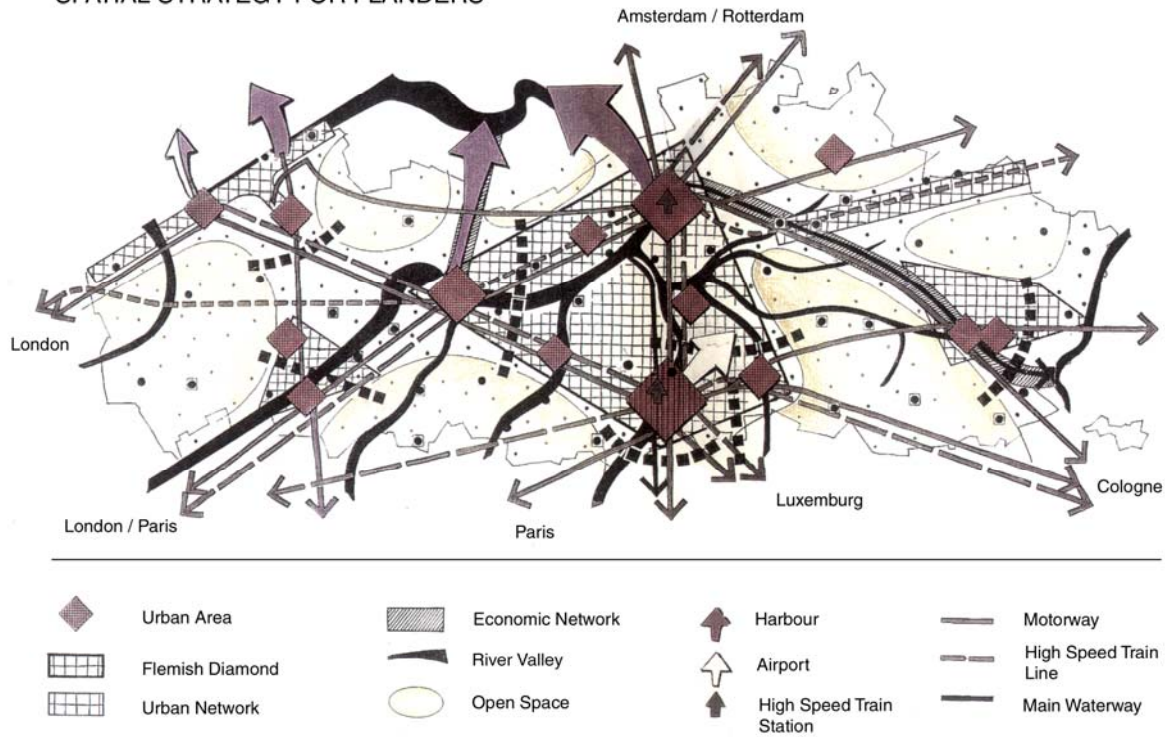
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- **The fourth track is about an inclusive and more permanent empowerment process involving citizens in major decisions. In this process, citizens learn about one another and about different points of view, and they come to reflect on their own points of view. In this way a store of mutual understanding can be built up, a sort of ‘social and intellectual capital’.**

# In what sense is traditional spatial planning different from strategic spatial planning?



# Imagining

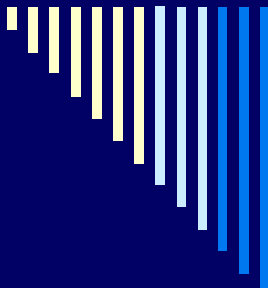
## SPATIAL STRATEGY FOR FLANDERS





# Shifting Boundaries

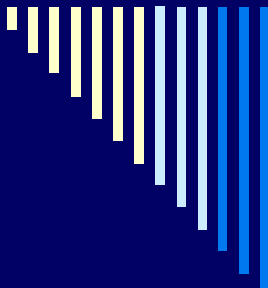
- **Unambiguous urban patterns are losing their validity and the clear distinction between town and country is becoming blurred. The actual spatial structure shows a pattern of loose parts (built up areas, infrastructures, but also natural entities and open spaces) functionally linked to each other. Within this fragmented entity, different stakeholders and actors representing different (spatial and organisational) layers come together. Spatial systems and logics on Global, European, regional and local level more and more interact and defend their own interests. In this view, the Flemish area was considered as one large fragmented and multi-layered entity with international, national, regional and local functions; large, regional and small urban areas, villages, natural elements, line-infrastructures, areas for economic activities, traffic flows, etc.**

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- **Many areas face the challenge to create a territorial governance system at a new level (network city). This highlights the tensions that occur between the well-known scale (and related government structure) of a nested hierarchy (from large to small or from top to bottom) and the scale (in terms of the reach) of relationships in time and space.**

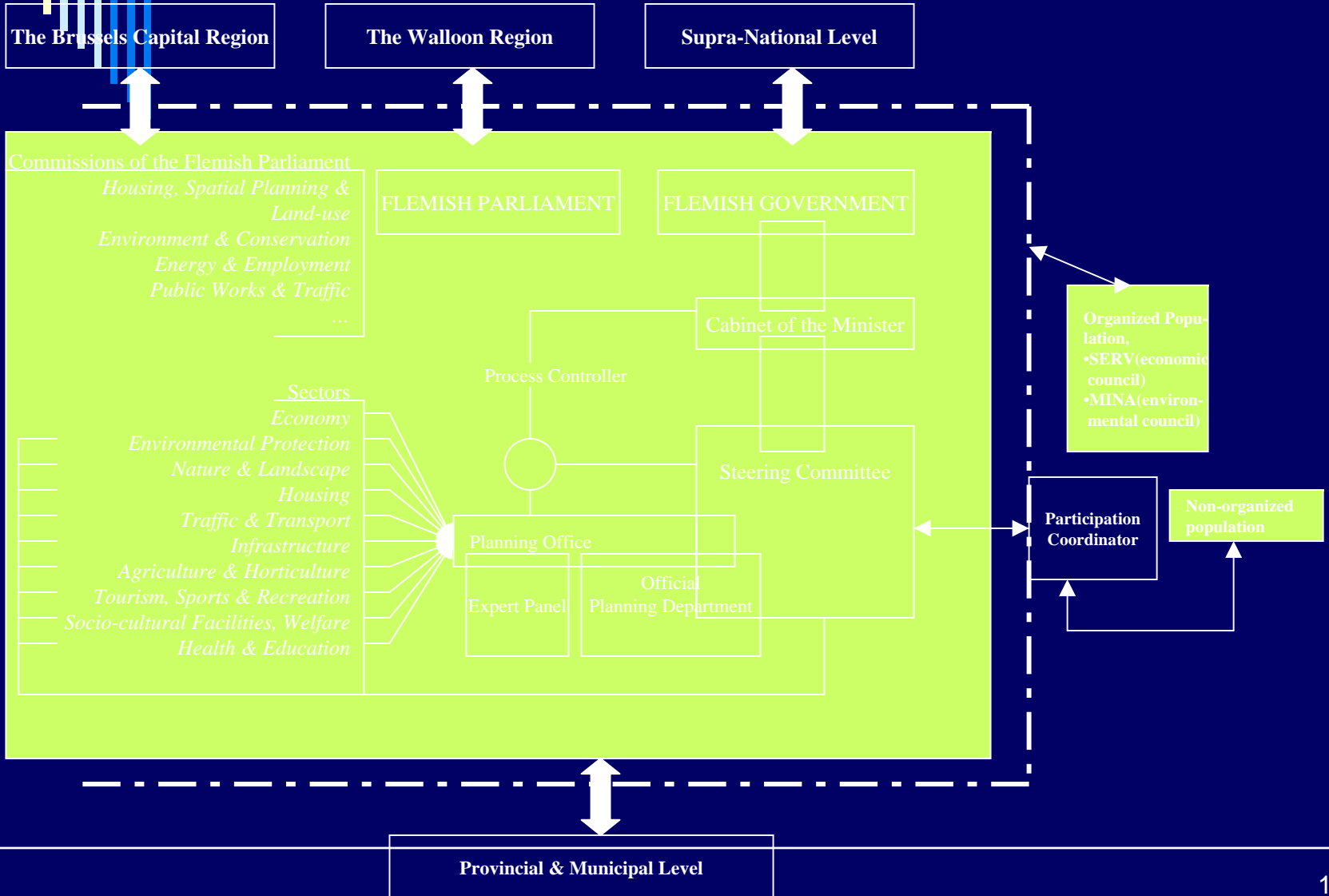


# Governance

- **Governance as the capacity to substantiate the search for creative and territorially differentiated solutions to problems/challenges and for a more desirable future situation through the mobilization of a plurality of actors with different and even competing interests, goals and strategies.**
- **This implies a degree of selectivity (means are limited) and the mutual dependency of actors, which means that problems cannot be solved and challenges cannot be met by just one actor. They require of a win-win situation and the involvement of actors on an equal basis.**

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- **A multi-level governance approach offers the potential to tease out causal linkages between global, national, regional, metropolitan and local change, while also taking account of the highly diverse outcomes of such interactions. The shifts in institutional sovereignty illustrate the embeddedness of place policy-making in the multiple institutional domains and interaction arenas that blurs the meaning of hierarchical settings in the development of policies.**

# COOPERATIVE MODEL





# It did not work. Why?

- ❑ **There was no clear idea of the content, the scope and the implications of a Strategic Plan;**
- ❑ **Previous attempts for a Strategic Plan all failed. So several sectors departments waited to see which way the wind blew this time;**
- ❑ **There was no store of mutual understanding (the kind of social and intellectual capital)**
- ❑ **Representatives of the sector departments acted merely as observers;**
- ❑ **It proved to be extremely difficult for the representatives of the traditional departments to overcome sector logics;**
- ❑ **Most sectors clearly still had more faith in the traditional (more hidden) way of influencing decisions.**



# Strategic Urban Projects

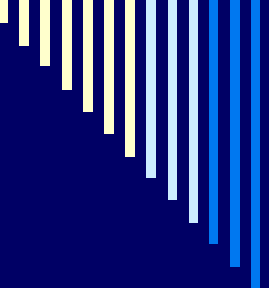
**Strategic planning is selective and oriented to issues that really matter. 'Strategic' implies that some decisions and actions are considered more important than others and that much of the process lies in making the tough decisions about what is most important for the purpose of producing fair, structural responses to problems, challenges, aspirations, and diversity. Strategic planning relates to implementation. Things must get done! This is seen as the pattern of purposes, policy statements, plans, programs, actions (short, medium and long-term), decisions and resource allocation that defines what a policy is in practice, what it does, and why it does it – from the points of view of various affected publics. This stresses the need to find effective connections between political authorities and implementation actors (officers, individual citizens, community organizations, private corporations and public departments). Strategic spatial planning is not just a contingent response to wider forces, but is also an active force in enabling change. This strategic planning cannot be theorized as though its approaches and practices were neutral with respect to class, gender, age, race and ethnicity.**



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# Institution building

- We gradually merged the planning team with the planning department. In this way a substantial permanent cell, who shared a stock of knowledge, information, sensitivity, mutual understanding and who were fully persuaded of the new ideas of the Strategic Plan was installed in the planning department. In doing so the basis for structural change in the department was provided both in numbers as well as in dedication to the new approach.**

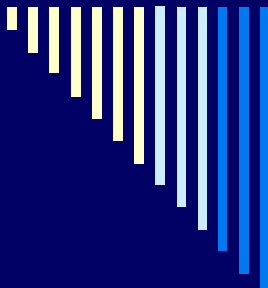
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- The planning department could draw upon this intellectual capital when using its control function to re-frame ways of thinking, ways of doing things, attitudes and practices of provincial and local governments, sector departments and consultants.**



# Metaphor Flemish Diamond

**The image of a diamond was consciously chosen for a whole range of reasons:**

- First, it recalls one of the strengths of the Flemish economy.**
- Second, the 'bright' image was used to reflect the potentials of the network.**
- Third, the term is easy to translate into the main languages.**
- Fourth, the image was also used to show that this area constitutes the 'hard core' of Flanders.**
- Fifth, the image depicts the individual cities as the 'facets', each contributing to the quality of the network.**
- Sixth, the image makes it clear that purposeful action is needed to reveal the full potential of the network. Indeed, without specific policies and specific actions (the cutting and polishing of the diamond), its potentials remain idle.**

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- The metaphor decodes what is susceptible to figuration in bringing forth from this urban network not what is actually there, but what may be said about it in terms of potentials.
  - The driving rationale behind the metaphor is one of competitiveness as the precondition for a possible wider acceptance of the concept.

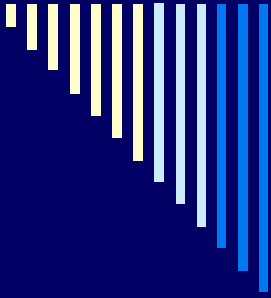




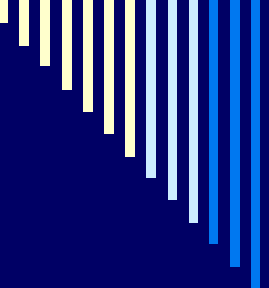
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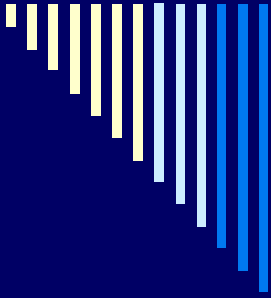
## What is the difference that 'new' strategic planning makes?

- **A first difference is related to time. It means that time flows from the 'invented' future, which challenges conventional wisdom, toward and into the experienced present. This means inventing a world that would not otherwise be. New strategic planning 'creates' a future environment, but all decisions are made in the present.**
- **Second, this 'created future' has to be placed within a specific context (economic, social, political, power), place, time and scale regarding specific issues and a particular combination of actors. It provides the setting for the process but also takes form, undergoes changes in the process.**



- **Third, new strategic planning is centered on the elaboration of a mutually beneficial dialectic between top-down structural developments and bottom-up local uniqueness.**
- **Fourth, new strategic planning is selective and oriented to issues that really matter. As it is impossible to do everything that needs to be done, ‘strategic’ implies that some decisions and actions are considered more important than others and that much of the process lies in making the tough decisions about what is most important for the purpose of producing fair, structural responses to problems, challenges, aspirations, and diversity.**

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- **Fifth, new strategic planning is about joint decision-making and integrated action. Territorial development may provide a more effective way of integrating agendas and actions at different levels of governance and of integrating other actors into civil society.**



- **Sixth, new strategic planning relates to implementation. Things must get done! This is seen as the pattern of purpose, policy statements, plans, programs, actions (short, medium and long-term), decisions and resource allocation that defines what a policy is in practice, what it does, and why it does it – from the points of view of various affected publics. This stresses the need to find effective connections between political authorities and implementation actors (officers, individual citizens, community organizations, private corporations, private corporations and public departments**