

More on Creative Governance

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Creativity is not restricted to fine arts or performing arts, to fashion design or fancy architecture. And, it's beyond Aix-en-Provence, where Mozart's *Così fan tutte* has been used this summer as an inspiring textbook for creative action on the festival stage. Creativity is entering the discourse of planners and policymakers, who are gridlocked in endless debates between pragmatic, uninspired rational planning, and visionary and normative, though unrealistic, blueprint planning. This issue of disP will contribute to the ongoing debate on the role of creativity in planning.

In November 2004, together with Alessandro Balducci from the Politecnico di Milano, we organized a German-Italian colloquium on "Creativity and Urban Governance in European City-Regions." It took place in the Villa Vigoni, the Italian-German Center for Cultural Exchange at Lake Como, Italy. This event was a follow-up to an international colloquium on "Creativity, Culture and Urban Development" which took place at the same location in October 2002 and which Klaus R. Kunzmann organized.

A selection of contributions to the colloquium in 2004 was published in DISP 158 (3/2004) prior to the event. These served as background papers to address and stimulate the debate and to foster a mutual learning process among the academics and practitioners from the fields of planning and policy analysis who attended the colloquium.

Eighteen academics and practitioners, from both the allegedly more systematic German milieu and the certainly more imaginative Italian context, presented their thoughts and ideas on the topic and participated in lively discussions with invited international experts for three days. Though we can't recreate the positive mood and fertile discourse environment of our three days at Villa Vigoni, a wonderful secluded spot on Lake Como, we believe that this second issue of DISP devoted to the same theme could give some of the flavor of the discussions and adequately complement the previous contributions and presentations published online at the Politecnico di Milano¹ Web site.

On opening day, after a general introduction to the colloquium by Alessandro Balducci, Klaus R. Kunzmann presented some of the many in-

terpretations of creativity and their application in the field of planning. This contribution is part of this issue of disP and provides readers with a conceptual framework to understand the many dimensions of the fuzzy concept of creativity in urban development. The colloquium had three sections: (i) presentations dealing with creative actors; creative planning and creative learning, (ii) presentations referring to the six dimensions of creative governance presented in our previous editorial in DISP 158: rationale and initiators; boundaries; legitimization; envisioning; communication and social learning (Balducci, Kunzmann and Sartorio 2004); and (iii) presentations on implementation tools and financing. To foster creativity in the intercultural discussion, no definition of creative governance was given beforehand.

Drawing on specific case studies from their own countries for the most part, and referring to contemporary practices in Europe, the contributions at the colloquium were aimed at interpreting "creativity" in the respective policy action context. They covered a wide spectrum of issues and perspectives, from successful city regions trying to maintain their competitive position (as in Turin, Bonn and Milan) to cities confronted with decline (such as the cities along the border between Germany and Poland). In all case studies, creativity was identified as a relevant element for effective governance, understood in terms of having the capability to develop new approaches to planning and local governance (significant policies and projects) and to enhance innovative decision-making processes.

The different nature of the materials notwithstanding, three meta-themes permeated the lively discussion. The first, in terms of recurrence and relevance, is undoubtedly related to the elements and dimensions that foster creativity in governance. The interpretations proposed were varied and articulate; some cases started from an accidental "low point" which unlocked creative "survival" approaches, as in the still declining case of Forst/Lausitz, presented in this issue by Ulf Matthiesen, and in the rather more successful case of Turin, discussed from different angles by Bruno Dente, Luigi Bobbio and Alessandra Spada, while Francesca Sartorio's

article on strategic planning in Italy offered insights into the many ways creativity can be expressed. Other articles referred to a particular asset in the local arena: the presence of one or more “champions,” as in the Hasselt case study presented by Louis Albrechts; the complexity and density of the arena; or the presence of more or less “steering” actors. A third group of presentations stressed specific endogenous factors or specific issues addressed during the planning processes, for example, in the cases described by Ursula Stein.

The second meta-theme refers to the methodology of analyzing complex governance cases as a way to define effectiveness in fostering innovative milieus and creativity-led planning processes. Some of the articles presented in this issue of disP report on the efforts needed to precisely define, concepts that otherwise are too volatile both in their meaning and interpretations as well as in their “use” in research and professional practice. Particularly relevant on this point, though they are referring to very different, in a way almost opposite situations, are the contributions by Matthiesen and Dente, Bobbio and Spada. Reading between the lines of their contributions one finds a plea for more tailor-made local research in the effort to adapt to situations that are too complex and too differentiated to be encapsulated in a static set of variables. The German case study by Ulf Matthiesen opens the way to a methodological “third way” by developing the concept of governance milieus in shrinking cities. The two relatively successful Italian case studies presented by Dente, Bobbio and Spada identify two crucial factors for the understanding of innovative local governance forms: complexity, understood as the diversity (in terms not only of the nature of the action but also the level) of actors acting in the local arena, and density, understood as the tightness of local networks in local governance arenas.

Finally, the need for defining new professional toolboxes for planners was the third meta-theme cutting across many of the contributions. The article by Louis Albrechts focuses specifically on the new mind-set planners have

to develop, a mind-set that is more concentrated on discontinuity and prospective thinking than on envisioning the future “as an extended present.” Similar thoughts were developed by Ursula Stein when she described her professional experience in mediating city-regional planning processes as an appeal to use all five senses, beauty and emotions along the long path to successful collective learning.

The article by Simon Miles, “Creativity, Culture and Urban Development: Toronto Examined,” which was presented at the first colloquium in 2002 was added to this issue because it brings another interesting perspective to the debate.

The colloquium last year in the Villa Vigoni was a magnificent event of intercultural learning, which, as usual, raised more questions than it could give answers. However, more creative action has clearly been suggested as a precondition for coping with the manifold challenges of urban development in European cities and city-regions, especially under conditions of growing social and economic disparity. Following John Dewey’s concept of “creative democracy,” such creative action (*Kreatives Handeln*) has been identified by Hans Joas as a third model to rationalize a normative action. No doubt, more thoughts have to be directed towards that end to avoid having creative planning remain just another fuzzy concept in urban and regional development discourses.

References

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Notes

- 1 http://www.diap.polimi.it/presestazione/seminari_convegni/convegni/villavigoni.html