STRATEGIC SPATIAL PLANNING AS PERSUASIVE STORYTELLING: THE CASE OF LOOP CITY

Kristian Olesen[1]

[1]Department of Development and Planning (Aalborg University), kristian@plan.aau.dk

Abstract

The paper analyses how the spatial vision of the Loop City for the Øresund Region has played an important persuasive role in legitimizing and mobilizing local and national political support for a light rail project along the outer ring road in the Greater Copenhagen Area. The paper discusses the persuasive power of spatial concepts in bringing transport infrastructure projects onto the national political agenda. In conclusion, the paper calls for critical attention to the rationalities underpinning practices of persuasive storytelling in contemporary strategic spatial planning.

> "Imagine a light rail, running from Lundtofte in north via Kgs. Lyngby, Gladsaxe, Herlev and Glostrup to Ishøj, Brøndby and Avedøre Holme in south, thereafter over the Øresund Bridge to Malmø and up along the Swedish coast back to Helsingør and returning to Lundtofte. This sounds like a future vision and it is indeed. But if the Ring City Vision for the urban areas along Ring 3 is implemented, this can be reality in 2047, precisely 100 years after the Finger Plan for the Greater Copenhagen Area was launched." (Realdania, press release 10th December 2010, author's translation)

1. Introduction

In the beginning of 2010, the Danish philanthropic foundation Realdania announced a partnership with ten suburban municipalities at the outskirts of the Greater Copenhagen Area. Realdania hired a team of consultants with the Danish architect consultancy BIG (Bjarke Engels Group) in the lead and charged them with the task of preparing a spatial vision for the ten municipalities. The resulting vision of the *'Loop City'* was handed over to the municipalities as a gift in December 2010. This paper analyses how the spatial vision of the Loop City has played an important persuasive role in bringing a light rail project connecting the ten suburban municipalities onto the national political agenda. In particular, the paper explores how the reframing of the suburban light rail project as a transport infrastructure project of national importance, and coupling the project to concerns of regional competitiveness and economic performance, have played an important persuasive role in legitimizing and mobilizing local as well as national political support for the infrastructure project.

The case of the Loop City spatial vision demonstrates the strong persuasive and imaginative powers of strategic spatial planning, in particular the use of spatial concepts, icons, and metaphors to communicate spatial policies (Davoudi & Strange, 2009; Dühr, 2007; Healey, 2006b, 2007; Jensen & Richardson, 2003; Kunzmann, 1996; van Duinen, 2013; Zonneveld, 2000). However, the case also draws attention to the fact that spatial visions are not neutral entities, but rather expressions of certain rationalities and important devices for constructing persuasive storylines about possible futures (Jensen & Richardson, 2003). Furthermore, the spatial vision of the Loop

City illustrates how (re)imaginations of space are strongly connected to policies of promoting mobility and investments in transport infrastructure (Jensen & Richardson, 2007). In this way, the case study supports previous studies stressing close relationships between mobility, power and territorial identity in strategic spatial planning (Jensen & Richardson, 2004). Furthermore, the case study raises more fundamental questions about the values and rationalities underpinning persuasive storytelling in strategic spatial planning. Here, the Loop City case is illustrative of concerns that strategic spatial planning has taken 'an infrastructural turn' (Dodson, 2009), being increasingly driven by neoliberal governmentalities of 'infrastructuralism' (Marshall 2013a, 2013b). In this way, the case study supports the thesis of an ongoing neoliberalization of strategic spatial planning (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2013; Olesen, 2014; Waterhout et al., 2013).

The paper is structured as follows. First, a framework for analysis is built with a point of departure in the conceptual understanding of strategic spatial planning as persuasive storytelling. Here, it is argued that a spatial vision is more likely to be persuasive and gain momentum, when it responds to a particular moment of opportunity; the naming and framing of the vision successfully couples policy streams; and the vision builds on meaningful spatial concepts and metaphors. Second, the case study of the Loop City vision and lobbying process for the light rail project is presented. The case study builds on document analysis of background reports, political documents, press releases, newspaper articles and spatial visions concerning the light rail project and the Loop City vision, as well as interviews with key actors involved in both or one of the projects. Third, the persuasive role of the Loop City vision is discussed with a point of departure in the framework outlined in section 2. Here, it is argued that the Loop City vision's coupling of the light rail project to urban development potentials and regional competitiveness has been instrumental in building local and national support for the light rail project. In conclusion, the paper discusses how spatial visions and their supportive storylines can play important persuasive roles in in legitimizing and rationalizing particular investments in transport infrastructure. The paper calls for greater attention to the values and rationalities underpinning practices of persuasive storytelling in strategic spatial planning.

2. Strategic Spatial Planning as Persuasive Storytelling

In the 1990s an interest in strategic spatial planning resurfaced in planning communities across Western Europe, resulting in a wave of experiments with preparation of spatial strategies for city regions, metropolitan regions, cross-border regions, and nation states. The driving forces behind these experiments were many (Albrechts et al., 2003), including political ambitions of locating urban areas in a European competitive landscape and promoting investments in transport infrastructures. In academia, a substantial effort was dedicated to reimagining and relegitimizing strategic spatial planning practices (Albrechts, 2004; Albrechts et al., 2003; Healey et al., 1997; Salet & Faludi, 2000). This effort involved reconceptualizing spatial strategies as inspirational visions containing many of the same characteristics as framing discourses (Healey, 2006a, 2007). It was recognized that the state no longer had direct steering capacity, and instead had "to 'steer' by persuasion, seduction and inducements" (Healey, 2007, p.182). Spatial strategies were designed to be persuasive, often relying on spatial concepts and metaphors with supportive storylines, seeking to mobilize attention and actors around their core ideas and transform how key actors think and act in urban areas (Healey, 2007, 2009). In line with a broader movement within policy analysis and planning theory, strategic spatial planning was reconceptualized as persuasive storytelling (Fisher & Forester, 1993; Throgmorton, 1996).

The new theorizations of strategic spatial planning stress that spatial planning "is not just about the articulation of strategic ideas, but about persuading and inspiring many different actors, in different positions in a governance landscape" (Healey, 2007, p.182). Whilst some academic interest has

been dedicated to understanding why and how spatial visions become powerful in shaping planning discourses and practices (Healey, 2007; Healey et al., 1997; Jensen & Richardson, 2004; Salet & Faludi, 2000), more critical empirical work is needed to understand these complex dynamics of strategic spatial planning. In this paper, the conceptual understanding of strategic spatial planning as persuasive storytelling is adopted in an analysis of a spatial vision's persuasive role in legitimizing and mobilizing attention for a particular transport infrastructure project. Here, the paper draws on the work of political scientist John W. Kingdon and his theorization of agenda-setting in American politics. The rest of this section constructs a framework for analysing the planning case of interest in this paper. The framework elaborates on a) the significance of a *moment of opportunity* for strategic spatial planning and how such a moment might arise; b) the importance of the *naming and framing* of spatial visions, in particular in terms of coupling policy streams; and c) the persuasive power of *spatial concepts* in conveying spatial policies.

2.1 Moment of opportunity

The timing for introducing a new spatial vision or spatial concept has to be right to be "worth the effort" (Healey, 2009, p.443). The success of a spatial vision in mobilizing support and slowly becoming embedded in the governance infrastructure of an urban area is often accredited to a particular *moment of opportunity* in time and space (Healey, 2009). Albrechts (1998) describes for example how certain historical-political and socio-economic conditions in Flanders provided a moment of opportunity for rethinking spatial planning in Flanders in the 1990s. Similar arguments have been made in analyses of the spatial strategies for Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales in the 2000s (Davoudi & Strange, 2009; Harris & Hooper, 2004; Healey, 2004).

Kingdon (2011) refers to such moments of opportunity as 'policy windows'. Policy windows are rare and open infrequently, but when they do open, they represent opportunities for shaping public policy (Kingdon, 2011). According to Kingdon (2011), a policy window opens as consequence of changes in policy streams, such as changes in government or government administration, changes in the national mood, or as a consequence of political attention to a particular problem. A policy window does not stay open for long, but when it opens, it represents "an opportunity for advocates of proposals to push their pet solutions, or to push attention to their special problems" (Kingdon, 2011, p.165). "Like surfers waiting for the big wave" (Kingdon, 2011, p.165), policy communities often have their pet solutions ready, being on a constant outlook for policy windows.

Drawing on a metaphor from biology, Kingdon (2011) suggests that proposals, alternatives and solutions float around in a 'primeval soup', just like molecules before life came into being. At a certain point in time proposals, alternatives and solutions bump into each other and couple. Just like molecules, many combinations are possible. Some ideas become prominent, whilst others quickly fade away, waiting to form part of new combinations. In the policy primeval soup, solutions look for problems to couple with, just as much as problems look for solutions. A policy window might allow certain issues onto the political agenda, but if the coupling between problem and solution is not made, the window will soon close. Often successful policies have a long history of trial-and-error behind them before the field is fertilized sufficiently and softened up for an idea to be considered political viable (Kingdon, 2011). A planning project might have a long history of maturing behind it, before it becomes part of a successful constellation, which gains political attention. The naming and framing of a spatial vision is one way to gain political attention.

2.2 Naming and framing

Spatial strategies are rarely invented from scratch. Often innovations in strategic spatial planning are a result of repackaging and coupling familiar elements in new ways. As Healey (2007) recognises, often endeavours in strategic spatial planning are merely about recognizing or naming strategies. A spatial vision's focusing and synthetic properties are closely related to the *naming and framing* of the vision (Healey, 2007; Schön & Rein, 1994). The naming of an urban area or a spatial vision will influence and potentially structure planning actors' thinking about and interpretation of planning problems in the area, whilst a frame will provide a strategic orientation for how to move forward. On one hand, a frame is highly selective, front-staging some issues, whilst back-staging others. In this way, the naming and framing of the problem plays an important role in setting the agenda (Kingdon, 2011). On the other hand, a frame is integrative, providing shelter for multiple issues and perspectives. Actors subscribing to the same frame do not necessarily have to share the same interests or subscribe to a shared picture of the future. A frame is like a discourse flexible and open for interpretation, allowing multiple actors to mobilize around it, promoting their own interests under the banner of the frame (Jensen & Richardson, 2003; van Duinen, 2013).

A strategic frame is often brought forward by supportive storylines and metaphors, acting as persuasive devices in the narrative of an alternative future (Healey, 2007; Throgmorton, 1996). In this way, strategic spatial planning is not only about naming and framing, but also claiming (van Duinen, 2013). Actors use storylines and metaphors as devices to make claims about a desirable future and the means to achieve it. This involves coupling problems and solutions in the policy stream (Kingdon, 2011). Here, the use of spatial concepts might play an important role in the naming and framing of a spatial vision. As Kunzmann (1996, p.144) recognizes spatial concepts hold the potential to "contribute more to achieving certain political goals than legal and financial instruments".

2.3 Spatial concepts

The use of *spatial concepts* in spatial planning is widespread. As Zonneveld (2000, p.267) recognises "where there is some sort of tradition of spatial planning we find spatial planning concepts". Spatial concepts play an important role in strategic spatial planning, as they are able to name and frame planning problems and innovations in a single word or image, reducing the complexity of spatial planning to a single storyline or metaphor (Kunzmann, 1996; van Duinen, 2013). In this way, spatial concepts convey clues and guidelines for action (Zonneveld, 2000). The design of a spatial concept often involves symbolic representation of an urban area in the form of an icon, diagram or map (Dühr, 2007; Zonneveld, 2000). In this way, a spatial concept can act as a frame or label for a spatial vision.

Whilst some spatial concepts become iconic and sediment into a country's planning culture, other concepts have short lives, and many do not even make it to the surface (van Duinen, 2013). Spatial concepts have the potential to cause conflict, as they bring some issues and geographies to the front, whilst leaving others in the back (Dühr, 2007). However, a spatial concept also holds the potential to bracket conflict, as its graphical expression allow for multiple interpretations (Olesen & Richardson, 2011). The meaning of a spatial concept is not static or absolute (van Duinen, 2013). A concept's meaning evolves over time, and actors might subscribe to different interpretations of the concept. Van Duinen (2013) illustrates how multiple meanings of a spatial concept can play an important role in mobilizing actors, as long as the different meanings are not contradictory.

3. From Light Rail to the Loop City

The legacy of the famous Finger Plan for the Greater Copenhagen Area from 1947 is still the foundation for contemporary spatial planning in the Greater Copenhagen Area. The spatial framework, of a hand with spread fingers in which urban development is concentrated in the palm and along the fingers supported by public transportation lines (S-trains), still constitutes the spatial logic of the city region. Since the 1990s there has been a growing lobbying for supplementing the existing S-train network with a ring link, connecting the suburban municipalities along the outer ring road (Ring 3) of the Greater Copenhagen Area. The lobbying process for the Ring 3 link can conceptually be understood as having taken place in the two separate policy streams of transport and urban development. In the analysis, it is argued that the lobbying was not successful until the two streams were coupled in a persuasive narrative about the development potentials in the suburban areas. Table 1 summarises the key events of the lobbying process in the transport and urban development streams.

3.1 Initial lobbying in the transport and urban development streams

In 1999 a study of the future public transportation needs in the Greater Copenhagen Area concluded that there would be a sufficient passenger base for upgrading the public transportation network with a ring link along part of Ring 3 (HT & the Ministry of Transport, 1999). This study became the starting point for a series of studies prepared on behalf of the Copenhagen County, analysing the feasibility of different modes of transport and different routes in Ring 3. All studies concluded that a ring link would not be socio-economically feasible. At the same time but in a different policy stream, the Ministry of the Environment initiated a study involving the Greater Copenhagen Authority and eight municipalities, with the aim of exploring models for revitalizing former industrial areas along Ring 3. The concluding report argued that a light rail link would open up for more intensive use of former industrial areas in Ring 3 (Ministry of the Environment et al., 2005). As part of the Danish Governance Reform in 2007, the Greater Copenhagen Authority and the Copenhagen County were abolished, and the ring link lost its main advocates. The municipalities, who now had realised the urban development potentials of a light rail link, created their own lobby platform, involving two additional municipalities. The municipal lobby platform created a light rail secretariat and formulated the ambition of preparing a joint spatial vision. The lobby platform became formerly known as the Ring City/Light Rail Cooperation (RC/LRC).

Whilst the municipal lobby platform was beginning to work in (and couple) the transport and urban development streams, the light rail project was slowly getting attention in national transport policy circles. In 2008 the Danish Infrastructure Commission presented its report, stressing the need for further analyses of a potential light rail link in Ring 3 (Infrastructure Commission, 2008). Later that year, a transport study was prepared on behalf of the municipal lobby platform, analysing the feasibility of five light rail links (COWI, 2008). Light rail was now the municipalities' preferred (and only viable) public transport option. In December 2008, the Danish Government announced a political transport agreement, which momentarily rejected light rail as a viable option in Ring 3. Instead a bus solution was presented as the Government's preferred mode of transport (Danish Government, 2008). Less than two months later, the Danish Government dedicated 2 billion Danish kroner to a light rail project in Aarhus and public transportation in Ring 3 in the 'Green Transport Policy' (Danish Government, 2009). The debate on a light rail link in Ring 3 was thereby not only reopened, but the light rail project had made it onto the national policy arena. In 2010 the first transport study prepared on behalf of the Ministry of Transport was published, comparing the light rail with a bus rapid transit (BRT) model in Ring 3. The study concluded that whilst BRT would be the cheapest model (and only

socio-economically feasible), the urban development perspectives would be much greater with a light rail solution (COWI, 2010).

Table 1. Key Events in the Transport and Urban Development Streams

	Transport stream	Urban development stream
1999	Study of future public transport needs in the Greater Copenhagen Area (by HT and the Ministry of Transport)	
2001	First transport study of the Ring 3 link (prepared for the Copenhagen County and HT)	
2003	Second transport study of the Ring 3 link (prepared for the Copenhagen County)	
2005		Project on revitalization of former industrial areas in Ring 3, involving national and regional bodies together with eight municipalities
2008	The Infrastructure Commission stresses the need for further analyses of public transport in Ring 3 Third transport study of the Ring 3 link (prepared for the RC/LRC) The Danish Government announces that bus is its preferred mode of transport in Ring 3	Ten municipalities in Ring 3 initiate the Ring City/ Light Rail Cooperation (RC/LRC)
2009	The Danish Government allocates 2 billion DKK to public transport in the Green Transport Policy	The OECD publishes its Territorial Review of Copenhagen
2010	Fourth transport study of the Ring 3 link (prepared for the Ministry of Transport)	The City Ring vision is published by the RC/LRC Realdania announces a cooperation with the RC/LRC The Loop City vision is presented by BIG
2011	The Danish Government, the region and ten municipalities announce a political agreement on a light rail project in Ring 3. The state sets aside 1.5 billion DKK.	
2012		The ten municipalities adopt the Loop City vision in a political charter
2013	New political agreement on the light rail project in Ring 3. The state sets aside additional 252 million DKK.	

3.2 Coupling policy streams: entering the Loop City

In the beginning of 2010, the municipal lobby platform presented its spatial strategy of the Ring City, an urban development corridor along Ring 3 supported by light rail (RC/LRC, 2010). The spatial strategy caught the attention of the Danish philanthropic foundation Realdania, which a month later announced a cooperation with the ten municipalities. Realdania hired a team with BIG in the lead, and charged them with the task of developing the Ring City strategy into a new spatial vision. The result, the spatial vision of the Loop City, was handed over to the municipalities as a gift in December 2010. In the vision, the Ring 3 light rail was reframed as a key missing link in developing the Øresund Region into the Loop City (BIG, 2010). Overnight the light rail project had transformed from a local suburban project into a key transport infrastructure project for the Øresund Region.

In June 2011 a political agreement on the first stage of the light rail link was announced between the Ministry of Transport, the Capital Region, and the municipalities. As part of the agreement, the Danish Government would pay 1.5 billion DKK of the 3.75 billion DKK estimated costs (Ministry of Transport, 2011). In June 2013 the Danish Governments allocated additional 252 million DKK to the light rail project (Ministry of Transport, 2013). In the meantime, the municipalities had adopted the Loop City vision in a political charter in 2012, outlining a five-point strategy for future municipal collaboration (RC/LRC, 2012). In a couple of years, the national mood seemed to have changed in favour of the light rail project. The next section analyses to what extent the Loop City vision has played any role in bringing the light rail project onto the national policy agenda.

4. Opening Policy Windows and Coupling Policy Streams

This section analyses how the Loop City vision and its supportive storylines have contributed to mobilize actors around the Ring 3 light rail project. With a point of departure in the framework outlined in section 2, this section discusses in turn a) how a moment of opportunity was created for the Loop City vision; b) how the naming and framing of the Loop City vision helped the vision to gain momentum; and c) how the spatial concept of the Loop City has played an important persuasive role in mobilizing actors around the light rail project.

4.1 Moment of opportunity

In the beginning of 2010, there were no signs of that the Øresund Region was to resurface and gain prominence in Danish spatial planning. In fact, Danish national spatial planning seemed to be in a slump at the time, suffering from little political attention (Olesen, 2011). The 2010 national planning report had broken with two decades of tradition of illustrating the Danish Government's spatial policies on the map of Denmark. The political interest in spatial concepts was literally not existing, if not downright sceptical after failed processes of preparing spatial visions at the scale of functional urban regions (Olesen & Richardson, 2011, 2012). The focus on the Øresund Region had more or less vanished from the national planning scene, after national spatial planning had taken a more inward-looking perspective from the beginning of the 2000s. The situation provided an opportunity for actors outside government to fill the gap in Danish strategic spatial planning. Furthermore, the OECD published its territorial review of Copenhagen in 2009, highlighted how the Øresund Region's competitiveness was decreasing as a consequence of inappropriate governance structures in the Greater Copenhagen Area (OECD, 2009). The OECD recommended that Denmark returned to its former policies of promoting Copenhagen from the 1990s. Whilst the implications of OECD's report yet had to resonate within government, they became a focal point for BIG's storyline of a region with unfilled potentials due to an inadequate public transportation network.

> "There is a great potential for a competitive region, especially in terms of networks for education, science and businesses. However the potential seems to be un-fulfilled especially due to the lack of a coherent infrastructural development plan for the region. This year the OECD launched a critical report emphasizing the lack of a common public infrastructure as one of the main obstacles towards a competitive cross border region." (BIG, 2010, p.131)

The project manager for the RC/LRC highlights how there at this point in time was a need for a political vision, which could instil hope in a time of economic crisis. In this way, the Loop City vision represented a hope of a better future for the suburban municipalities.

> "I believe that after the crisis atmosphere emerged in 2008 there has been a need for some kind of lifeline or political vision. Something that points to that we are doing something, we are on our way in another direction, we are actually doing something to get out of this crisis, we are trying to build the foundation for growth again. I believe this has been important for supporting this vision." (Interview, project manager RC/LRC, author's translation)

In this way, the current state of affairs, reflecting a "crisis atmosphere", provides a moment of opportunity for promoting new spatial planning ideas, which seek to reinvigorate Copenhagen and the Øresund Region's competitiveness. A policy window is opened, into which the RC/LRC can push its light rail project.

4.2 Naming and framing

Continuous regional and municipal lobbying for the light rail project and preparation of transport study after transport study had resonated little with national policy agendas throughout the 2000s. At most the continuous lobbying might have contributed to a slow softening up of the Ministry of Transport's policy on light rail projects. The lobbying begins to have a greater impact, when it is coupled to urban development potentials. In this coupling, the light rail project is promoted as the solution to the problem of how to revitalize former suburban industrial areas. However at this point in time, the light rail is still politically perceived as a solution to a local problem. The project manager for the RC/LRC summarizes the Ministry of Transport's perspective on the light rail project in 2009 as:

> "Well, you held political meetings with all the political spokesmen in transport and tried to get the message through. But it was met by a 'speak to the hand' attitude. The Minister of Transport […] said directly, 'well it is fine that you want a light rail in Ring 3, but it is a municipal task. It is a local light rail.'" (Interview, project manager the RC/LRC, author's translation)

The Loop City vision, in particular the naming and framing of the Loop City, provides a breakthrough in the lobbying. In the Loop City vision, the initial idea of the Ring City with the light rail link as the backbone is reframed as not only a project of national importance, but also a missing link in the spatial vision of creating a loop around the Øresund Region. The idea of preparing a vision for the Øresund Region and not just the Ring City area came out of the pragmatic insight that the growth in the suburban municipalities alone would not be sufficient to develop the vast amount of land for potential redevelopment. If a redevelopment strategy for the suburban area was to be successful, the areas had to absorb growth from the entire Øresund Region. BIG decided therefore to write the development potentials of the suburban municipalities into a regional context.

>"The idea of creating a loop came out of that if you have to be honest, then there is not enough growth to develop 11 km² suburb in Copenhagen. There is simply not. We soon realized that we had to zoom out and write these areas into a much larger context. And in this way, it suddenly made sense to view the light rail in a much broader perspective, because these suburban areas have potentials. But on the other hand, if they remain Copenhagen suburbs there is not enough growth to develop all 11 km² at once. So in this way we began to think it [the suburban area] as part of a development region instead." (Interview, project leader BIG, author's translation)

According to the project manager for the RC/LRC, the reframing of the light rail project as a project of national importance was instrumental in putting the project on the national political agenda.

"… I have to say, I believe actually that this [Loop City] is contributing to placing the light rail on the national agenda. Not necessarily because the politicians have read it [the vision], but the rhetoric is moving towards it. Everybody is at the same time talking within this growth agenda, and OECD highlights that infrastructure and growth are inextricably linked. So in this way the ground is fertilized, so that the arguments come at the right time. And then there is an opening. […] The rhetoric shifts in two years. […] So in this way, you might say that we have succeeded in coupling the two things." (Interview, project manager the RC/LRC, author's translation)

The municipalities had already realized the importance of coupling the light rail project to urban development potentials in the Ring City vision. The Loop City vision zooms out and couples the Ring City to regional competitiveness in a persuasive storyline about future development potentials across scales. In the vision, the suburban Ring City area is not only named and framed as an important link in a Øresund loop, but claims are being made about the future development potentials in these areas. Whilst it is probably too much to credit the political agreement on the light rail project entirely to the Loop City vision, there is no doubt in the project manager's mind that coupling the light rail project to regional and national agendas of economic growth and competitiveness has been an important contributing factor. Figure 1 illustrates the coupling of policy streams in the Loop City vision.

4.3 The spatial concept

The project manager for the RC/LRC highlights in the quotation above that it is not the content of the Loop City vision, but rather its symbolic value that has contributed to put the light rail project on the national agenda. She argues that the Loop City vision's prominence is not necessarily a consequence of that "the politicians have read it", but rather that "the rhetoric is moving towards it". This suggests that the Loop City vision, or perhaps more precisely the ideas behind it, have played an important role in shaping the planning discourse. Here, it is not the spatial concept of the loop in a literal sense that is powerful, but rather the ideas the metaphor represents. In fact, the concept of the loop should not even be understood literally, but as a metaphor of cross border collaboration.

"No, we have created it [the loop] to broaden it out across the Øresund Region. But it is not like, the loop should not be taken literally as a coherent metro connection, which runs in a loop. In that way it is an abstraction, which is about drawing a ring around the Øresund - common strategies on infrastructure, which are thought together […] That is what this strategy is about." (Interview, project manager the RC/LRC, author's translation)

The persuasive dimension of spatial visions and the power of spatial concepts are elements BIG deliberately sought to utilize in the preparation of the Loop City vision. Communicating and promoting the vision has been an important aspect of BIG's work.

> "It is important that a vision is easy to remember. Therefore it is obvious that a title must make sense. A good title makes sense. Some good visualisations of what we envision is something people will remember. And an explanation or storytelling in a language that people can understand is important, if you want to target broadly. […] And this has had an enormous significance for Loop City. It is obvious that it is a name, which is easy to remember. It is bordering to being a brand. But I believe this is important when you build a common front in terms of getting approval for visions for these ten suburban municipalities. I actually believe it is quite essential." (Interview, project leader BIG, author's translation)

Here, the project leader from BIG points to the persuasive power of spatial concepts in conveying spatial policies "in a language that people can understand" and in a way "people will remember". In this way, the metaphor of the Loop City provides a frame of reference, which the ten municipalities have in common. It becomes a brand or an icon for cross-municipal strategic planning. Perhaps most importantly, the RC/LRC project manager highlights how the Loop City vision has had an important "internal pedagogical effect" by creating a cross municipal understanding of the need to collaborate and not at least finance a substantial part of the light rail. In this way, the naming and framing of the vision and the spatial concept of the Loop City have played an important role in mobilizing local political actors around the common project of the light rail.
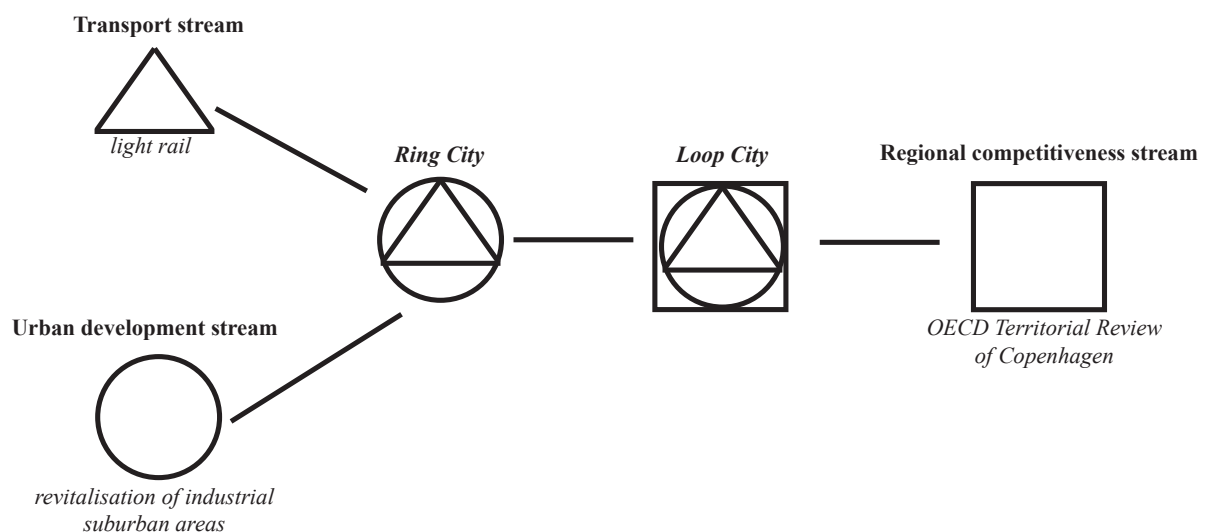

Figure 1. Coupling of Policy Streams in the Loop City Vision

5. Conclusions and critical reflections

Strategic spatial planning has since the beginning of the 1990s developed into an exercise in persuasive storytelling. Spatial visions draw on spatial concepts and metaphors as persuasive devices

in the creation of narratives of desired futures. The naming and framing of spatial visions play an important role in mobilizing actors in support of the ideas promoted. However, there can be given no universal guidelines for the design of persuasive spatial visions. Spatial strategy-making involves first and foremost "political astuteness" (Healey, 2009, p.441) and a careful reading of the governance landscape (Healey, 2007). The case of the Loop City illustrates that careful attention must be paid to the opening of policy windows and coupling of policy streams in the preparation of persuasive spatial visions. The coupling of policy streams is most effective, when it addresses the policy window of current national political concerns. In such cases, a policy window provides a moment of opportunity for endeavors in strategic spatial planning.

The case of the Loop City demonstrates that spatial visions are not neutral. They portray certain rationalities and perform important roles in constructing persuasive storylines about possible futures (Jensen & Richardson, 2003). Endeavours in strategic spatial planning can play an important role in bringing certain policy issues and particular policy solutions on the national political agenda. As demonstrated in this paper, the spatial vision of the Loop City has played an important persuasive role in upscaling the significance of the Ring 3 light rail link, and thereby legitimizing the need and rationalizing the importance of the project. In addition, the Loop City vision has played an important persuasive role in mobilizing local political actors in support of the project. The Loop City vision is underpinned by a particular set of rationalities, expressed in an understanding of a (somewhat) causal relationship between investments in transport infrastructures and regional competitiveness. Furthermore, the vision builds on the premise of transport infrastructure as catalyst for urban development, and a business model in which increase in land value can finance investments in transport infrastructures. A similar development strategy was applied with only limited success (from an economic perspective) in the development of Ørestad and the Copenhagen metro (Jørgensen et al., 1997; Majoor, 2009).

The case of the Loop City illustrates how Danish strategic spatial planning is dominated by a particular set of (neoliberal) governmentalities promoted through, in this case, OECD's Territorial Review of Copenhagen and a national mood of crisis atmosphere. This context provides moments of opportunity for promoting investments in transport infrastructure as solutions to continuous concerns with competitiveness and economic performance. As in many other countries, infrastructure projects have increasingly become the focal point of Danish strategic spatial planning. These projects are often, rather unreflectively, being portrayed as paramount to competitiveness and economic success. The Loop City case supports therefore the thesis that strategic spatial planning is increasingly governed by infrastructuralism (Marshall, 2013a, 2013b), and that we might be witnessing an 'infrastructure turn' in strategic spatial planning (Dodson, 2009).

6. References

- Albrechts, L., 1998. The Flemish diamond: precious gem and virgin area. European Planning Studies, 6(4), pp.411-424.
- Albrechts, L., 2004. Strategic (spatial) planning re-examined. Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design, 31(5), pp.743-758.
- Albrechts, L., Healey, P. and Kunzmann, K.R., 2003. Strategic spatial planning and regional governance in Europe. Journal of the American Planning Association, 69(2), pp.113-129.
- Allmendinger, P. and Haughton, G., 2013. The evolution and trajectories of English spatial governance: 'neoliberal' episodes in planning. Planning Practice & Research, 28(1), pp.6-26.
- BIG, 2010. Loop City Ringbyen. Copenhagen: Ring City / Light Rail Cooperation and Realdania.
- COWI, 2008. Vurdering af letbane langs Ring 3. Report September 2008. COWI for Letbanesamarbejdet Ring 3.
- COWI, 2010. Ring 3 – Letbane eller BRT? Report July 2010. COWI for the Ministry of Transport.
- Danish Government, 2008. Bæredygtig transport – bedre infrastruktur. Copenhagen: Danish Government.
- Danish Government, 2009. En Grøn Transportpolitik, January 2009, Copenhagen: Danish Government.
- Davouid, S. and Strange, I. eds., 2009. Conceptions of space and place in strategic spatial planning. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Dodson, J., 2009. The 'infrastructure turn' in Australian metropolitan spatial planning. International Planning Studies, 14(2), pp.109-23.
- Dühr, S., 2007. The visual language of spatial planning: exploring cartographic representations for spatial planning in Europe. London: Routledge.
- Fisher, F. and Forester, F., eds., 1993. The argumentative turn in policy analysis and planning. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Harris, N. and Hooper, A., 2004. Rediscovering the 'spatial' in public policy and planning: an examination of the spatial content of sectoral policy documents, Planning Theory & Practice, 5(2), pp.147-169.
- Healey, P., 2004. The treatment of space and place in the new strategic spatial planning in Europe, International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 28(1), pp.45-67.
- Healey, P., 2006a. Transforming governance: challenges of institutional adaption and new politics of space. European Planning Studies, 14(3), pp.299-320.
- Healey, P., 2006b. Relational complexity and the imaginative power of strategic spatial planning. European Planning Studies, 14(4), pp.525-46.
- Healey, P., 2007. Urban Complexity and Spatial Strategies. London: Routledge.
- Healey, P., 2009. In search of the "strategic" in spatial strategy-making. Planning Theory & Practice, 10(4), pp.439-457.
- Healey, P., Khakee, A., Motte, A. and Needham, B. eds, 1997. Making strategic spatial plans. London: UCL Press.
- HT and Ministry of Transport, 1999. Projekt Basisnet. Resumérapport. Copenhagen: HT and Ministry of Transport.
- Infrastructure Commission, 2008. Danmarks Transport Infrastruktur 2030. January 2008, Copenhagen: Infrastructure Commission.
- Jensen, A. and Richardson, T., 2007. New region, new story: imagining mobile subjects in transnational space. Space and Polity, 11(2), pp.137-50.
- Jensen, O.B. and Richardson, T., 2003. Being on the map: the new iconographies of power over European space. International Planning Studies, 8(1), pp. 9-34.
- Jensen, O.B. and Richardson, T., 2004. Making European space: mobility, power and territorial identity. London: Routledge.
- Jørgensen I., F. Kjærsdam, and J. Nielsen, 1997. A plan of hope and glory: an example of development planning in Denmark after Maastricht. In P. Healey, A. Khakee, A. Motte, and B. Needham (eds.), Making strategic spatial plans: innovation in Europe. London, UCL Press.
- Kingdon, J.W., 2011. Agendas, alternatives and public policies, updated 2nd edition. Boston, Massachusetts: Longman.

- Kunzmann, K., 1996. Euro-megalopolis or themepark Europe? Scenarios for European spatial development. International Planning Studies, 1(2), pp.143–163.
- Majoor, S., 2008. Progressive planning ideals in a neo-liberal context, the case of Ørestad Copenhagen. International Planning Studies 13(2), pp.101-117.
- Marshall, T., 2013a. Planning major infrastructure: a critical analysis. New York: Routledge.
- Marshall, T., 2013b. The remodeling of decision making on major infrastructure in Britain. Planning Practice & Research, 28(1), pp.122-40.
- Ministry of the Environment, Albertslund, Brøndby, Glostrup, Hvidovre, Høje-Taastrup, Ishøj, Rødovre and Vallensbæk Municipalities, Copenhagen County, Greater Copenhagen Authority, Ministry of Economy and Commerce, and Ministry of Transport, 2005. Revitalisering af hovedstadens vestegn. Copenhagen: Ministry of the Environment.
- Ministry of Transport, 2011. Transportminister Hans Christian Schmidt har i dag indgået aftale med Region Hovedstaden og 11 kommuner om en letbane i Ring 3. Press release 29th June 2011.
- Ministry of Transport, 2013. Bred politisk aftale om letbane i hovedstaden, busser og cykler. Press release 19th June 2013.
- OECD, 2009. OECD territorical reviews: Copenhagen, Denmark 2009. OECD.
- Olesen, K., 2011. Strategic spatial planning in transition: a case study of Denmark. Unpublished PhD thesis. Aalborg: Aalborg University.
- Olesen, K., 2014. The neoliberalisation of strategic spatial planning. Planning Theory. DOI: 10.1177/1473095213499340.
- Olesen, K. and Richardson, T., 2011. The spatial politics of spatial representation: relationality as a medium for depoliticisation? International Planning Studies, 16(4), pp.355-375.
- Olesen, K. and Richardson, T., 2012. Strategic spatial planning in transition: contested rationalities and spatial logics in twenty-first century Danish planning experiments. European Planning Studies, 20(10), pp.1689-1706.
- Realdania, 2010. Ringbyen udstilles på Lyngby Rådhus. Press release 10th December 2010. Retrieved from: www.realdania.dk.
- Ring City/Light Rail Cooperation (RC/LRC), 2010. Byvision Ringbyen. Copenhagen: Ring City/Light Rail Cooperation.
- Ring City/Light Rail Cooperation (RC/LRC), 2012. På vej mod Loop City 2047. Politisk Charter. Copenhagen: Ring City/Light Rail Cooperation.
- Salet, W. and Faludi, A. eds, 2000. The revival of strategic spatial planning. Amsterdam: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie Van Wetenschappen.
- Schön, D. and Rein, M., 1994. Frame reflection: towards the resolution of intractable policy controversies. New York: Basic Books.
- Throgmorton, J.A., 1996. Planning as persuasive storytelling. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- van Duinen, L., 2013. Mainport and corridor: exploring the mobilizing capacities of Dutch spatial concepts. Planning Theory & Practice, 14(2), pp.211-232.
- Waterhout, B., Othengrafen, F. and Sykes, O., 2013. Neo-liberalization processes and spatial planning in France, Germany, and the Netherlands: an exploration. Planning Practice & Research. 28(1), pp.141-159.
- Zonneveld, W., 2000. Discursive aspects of strategic planning: a deconstruction of the 'balanced competitiveness' concept in European spatial planning, in: W. Salet and A. Faludi, eds. The revival of strategic spatial planning, pp.267-280. Amsterdam: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen.