

When Creativity Meets Metropolitan Governance

When creativity meets governance, chances are that this meeting will generate energy towards good metropolitan governance. However, creativity is a scarce resource, and the connectivity between creativity and governance does not materialize automatically. Only an action-oriented approach can make each fruitful for the other. We elaborate the "model for metropolitan governance" and hypothesize that creativity has to become part of the three interconnected structuring systems of governance, i.e., strategy, structures and culture.

The particular links between governance and creativity are creative people and the creative culture and artefacts they produce, such as tools for the visualization and design of landscapes. A "reality check" shows that it takes certain premises to connect creativity to governance: a high level of pressure for innovation that exceeds the sunk cost of no-action, a process design that allows space for mutual learning and creative exploration, and "change agents" in the form of open-minded people.

1 Introduction

According to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED Online 2004) creativity is defined as the ability to create or bring into being, to produce where nothing was before. Creativity has an overwhelming appeal to everybody: Who does not want to be creative or to possess a creative faculty? However, it appears that in everyday economic and political life, all too many activities and deeds seem to lack exactly that most wanted ability. Thus, creativity displays the character of a scarce resource. What happens when creativity, as a scarce resource, meets metropolitan governance?

Metropolitan governance is a common-life political process that is happening everywhere in urbanized land-

scapes or metropolitan regions. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) defines governance today as "the organization and administration of regional authorities and institutions on the most varied levels as well as the corresponding processes of decision-making, cooperation, and exertion of influence" (OECD 2001). But, as most observers of politico-institutional development will agree, good metropolitan governance is a scarce resource as well. The OECD definition points to aspects that are critical for this paper's debate on creativity and governance. Governance actors are confronted with the need to develop procedures and structures in order to tackle the complex and intertwined problems of metropolitan regions. Following these lines, Benz and Fürst (2002) explicate that through institutional learning there is the expectation that experiences stemming from governance projects eventually will transform into a lasting renewal of public law and public administrative structures.

This paper explores the interrelationships between these two notions, which both seem to be of a rare kind. We hypothesize that good metropolitan governance has to be understood as an interactive, multi-level learning process. Therefore, we present an action model that helps conceptualize how governance on various spatial levels can be managed more effectively. By distinguishing three interconnected structuring systems, that is, governance strategy, governance structures and governance culture, the action model offers openings for integrating creativity as an explanatory determinant into the model (Section 2). Section 3 links creativity with territorial and metropolitan economic development. Section 4 explores how creativity can be put to use for good metropolitan governance with the help of our action model. A case study then helps identify the manifold obstacles of connecting creativity to governance (Section 5). Finally, Section 6 draws preliminary conclusions on the interrelationship between creativity and governance by postulating the use of an action-focused and an instrument-foc-

used creativity approach within the action model for metropolitan governance.

2 Metropolitan Governance Today

The pressing need for continuously learning and developing adequate forms of governance is especially true for metropolitan regions. Since they are the major centres of spatial development, economic activities and social interaction, they are the critical "hot spots" for future social and spatial development. The challenge for metropolitan governance as an ongoing change process takes shape when we look at the tasks and well-known problems at hand in metropolitan regions. This process is characterized by a lack of metropolitan design qualities and poor identification of the population with the living and working environment and community life. There is a parallel tendency to turn central business districts and historic centres into theme towns and create islands of high-scale working and living environments, while social segregation pushes less fortunate members of society towards deprived locations. The discourse on the qualities and "readability" of urban cultural landscapes developed and intensified in the 1990s. While US scholars coined the terms "suburban sprawl" and "edge city" (Garreau 1991), in Germany, people referred to metropolitan regions as "Grossräumig wuchernde Stadtlandschaft" (Blotevogel 1998; Fürst 1994) or "Zwischenstadt" (Sieverts 1997), while in French-speaking areas, the terms "métropolisation" and "rurbanisation" (Bassand 1997) emerged.

For many observers from the European Union, the Swiss Federal system is a role model for the solution of their own development dilemmas. Nevertheless, the current Swiss situation does show a fragmentation of jurisdictions and the deficiencies in the governance capacity for solving inter-community, inter-cantonal and international problems (OECD 2002, Thierstein et al. 2003). Comparably late in the European context, the Federal Government of Switzerland turned to the problems and governance

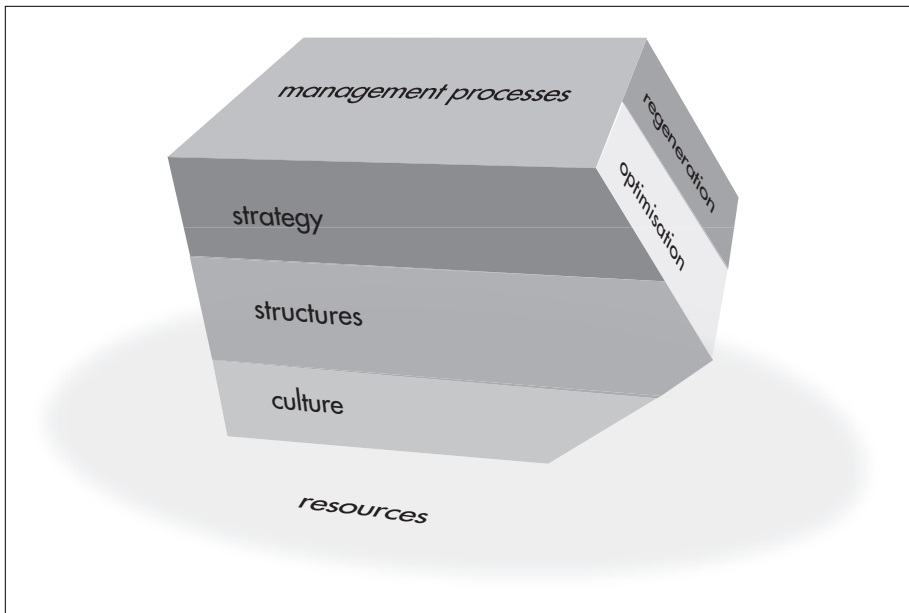


Figure 1: The action model for metropolitan governance

challenges of city-regions. As late as 1997, with the revision of the Federal Constitution, the Federation took more account of the concerns of the urban agglomerations. The Federal Council's 2001 agglomeration policy is a milestone that we will refer to later in this paper.

This glance at the situation of governance today leads us to postulate the need for a governance model. The OECD (2001) maintains that improved metropolitan governance would not result solely from the reform of institutions and finances; it is rather a question of changing behaviour and governance culture as well. Thus, changes in government institutions need to be based on an evolutionary, process-centred – and not a deterministic – understanding of spatial development. To adapt governance to the tasks of spatial development and control in metropolitan regions, we developed an action model by applying elements of the St. Gall management concept (Schwaninger 1997; Rüegg-Stürm 2002; Thierstein et al. 2003). This model views institutional change in a comprehensive way as it (1) points to the need for explicit management processes, (2) distinguishes two development modes, and (3) relies

on three interconnected structuring systems (see Figure 1). First, we briefly look at the three structuring systems:

- The *strategy* helps orient and focus a region's activities. The strategy describes the tasks that arise from a region's concept of itself, including the functions that the region intends to fulfil. Thus the focus is on "doing the right things" and we speak of the "governance strategy" of the action-oriented model.
- The *structures* denote relatively stable arrangements in time and space. This means both information and management systems in the sense of sets of rules that support the fulfilling of functions, as well as developmental and procedural organization. The structures help co-ordinate and fine-tune all the region's relevant activities. The focus is on "doing things right" and we speak of the "governance structure" of the action-oriented model.
- *Culture* means behaviour patterns, in particular, cultural attitudes, values, principles and norms, recurring routines and trusted forms. Common culture and behaviour help create identity and a sense of belonging. We speak of the "governance culture" of the action-oriented model.

The three structuring systems must be interdependent if a governance reform is to be efficient and effective. Improvement of metropolitan governance means a simultaneous and mutually coordinated development of strategy, structures and culture.

For planning practitioners and scholars alike, it is evident that strategy, structures and culture do not emerge out of a perfectly rational and logical interplay. Power relations and self-interest go along with any individual or institutional endeavour. As Figure 1 indicates, the long-term viability of a metropolitan region needs explicit management of governance processes.

Looking at structuring systems and management processes alone will not do the job. The development of metropolitan regions rarely follows a smooth path. Rather frequently, turbulent phases of radical structural change are followed by phases of incremental and continuous optimization before the next phase of basic renewal or regeneration sets in again. Therefore, it becomes important to be aware of which development mode a region is in (Figure 1). The two modes of optimization and regeneration pose different challenges to metropolitan governance. We hypothesize that metropolitan regions that are in a state of regeneration are especially in dire need of the use of creativity as a tool for improving governance. Our action model thus offers multiple opportunities to explore particular functions for creativity.

3 From "Creative Destruction" to "Creative Spaces"?

Metropolitan regions have come into focus with regard to their role as economic drivers. Indeed, this regional view has traces in Joseph Schumpeter's work. He highlighted the crucial role of the single entrepreneur who is shaping the fate of the economy by inventing and creating new products, new production processes and developing new management techniques and organizational structures (Schumpeter 1934). New, young firms will form while established and "institutionalized" firms will

vanish, thus producing a cycle of "creative destruction". Schumpeter argued that those who succeed at innovating are rewarded by having a temporary monopoly over what they have created. This control, in turn, is the lever that allows innovators to gain an enhanced position in the market and related temporary profits or "economic rents" from their innovations (Schumpeter 1950). Ever since Schumpeter, the notion of the creative entrepreneur has been coupled with the innovation process of the firm, thus producing swarms of researchers that approached this inter-linkage from the firm level as well as from the inter-firm level (Abernathy, Clark 1985).

Schumpeter was mainly preoccupied with the fate of the creative and innovative entrepreneur who is replaced by the manager and the managerial corporation. Later, regional economists and geographers began to apply his notion of creative destruction to the meso-level of regional development. Richard Florida (1996) examined the role of new forms of production organization in the process of regional economic transformation. He argued that there is a geographic or regional element to the transformative forces, which Schumpeter identified as "gales of creative destruction", as new forms of production organization transform older regions. Up to then, the term "creative" was still used more in analogy to Schumpeter's notion of "creative destruction". Regional studies have tried different approaches to describe and explain concentrations of innovative activity and entrepreneurial dynamism with evolutionary approaches that include the notion of technological trajectories and path dependency. In the 1990s especially, concepts such as the "learning region" (Florida 1995; Morgan 1997), "regional systems of innovation" (Cooke et al. 1997; Asheim, Isaksen 1997), as well as "innovative and creative milieus" (Maillat 1995; Fromhold-Eisebith 1999) were being discussed. Finally, the analytical and normative debate began to focus more on the concentration process of creative industries (Caves 2000), start-up firms, and the people in

metropolitan regions and city centres (Grabher 2001; Scott 2001).

Over the last 20 years, the founding model of the central-place city has been replaced by the network city and the network cities system (Batten 1995), with considerable consequences for the governance of such institutional systems. In general, researchers assume that it is the knowledge-intensive business activities that propel the development of re-centralization on a larger spatial scale (Dümmler et al. 2004). In the trail of globalization and the race for innovation, regions and urbanized city-regions, as well as countries with few natural resources, such as Switzerland, will depend on using knowledge and creativity as the most important raw material for the competitiveness of their companies and their societies.

When we look at changing modes of spatial and territorial development, the notions of the "knowledge society" in general (Storper 1992) and the "knowledge economy" in particular (Florida 2002) come to our attention. Florida (2002) states that the knowledge economy is under-girded by a new set of institutions that have emerged just to support the production and transmission of innovative ideas. That "social structure of creativity" comprises "(1) new systems for technological creativity and entrepreneurship, (2) new and more effective models for producing goods and services, and (3) a broad social, cultural and geographic milieu conducive to creativity of all sorts" (Florida 2002: 48). As a consequence, the rise of the creative economy has a profound effect on social groups or classes, thus leading to the formation of the "creative class". Hence, Florida distinguishes between two components (Florida 2002: 69):

- The "super-creative core" includes scientists and engineers, university professors, poets and novelists, artists, entertainers, actors, designers and architects as well as "the thought-leadership of modern society: non-fiction writers, editors, cultural figures, think-tank researchers, analysts and other opinion-makers."
- The "creative class" includes "creative professionals who work in a wide

range of knowledge-intensive industries, such as high-tech sectors, financial services, the legal and health care professions, and business management."

It is important to bear in mind that alongside the "elite" of the creative class, there is another social group that is called the "service class". The service class is the flip side of the internationalized networking process of generating added value in larger metropolitan city-regions. The service class lives back to back with the creative class and is thus a constitutive part of what Saskia Sassen (2001) calls the global cities.

The creative economy and the creative class are always spatially anchored. Florida lays out a "geography of creativity" with a new geography of class that is concentrated in urbanized areas. To understand this new geography of creativity and its effects on economic outcomes, he identifies the three "Ts", the three necessary preconditions for successful urban or regional development: "technology, talent and tolerance" (Florida 2002: 249). It seems obvious to us that the governance issue could profit from the three Ts of the creative class. The first field of application is using creative technologies for supporting the process of managing metropolitan governance, while the second is involving the talents of people who form the creative class. The third field of applying the three Ts is a more profound openness of society to entrepreneurial individuals coming from all geographical corners and all walks of life (Florida 2002). In other words, it is diversity of lifestyles and the clustering of talents that produces what economists call "urbanization economies" – and what we would like to put into use for the management of metropolitan governance.

To sum up, knowledge- and creativity-intensive business activities are more and more the driving forces for economic development. Richard Florida's (2002) three Ts cluster in metropolitan city-regions and urban centres. In turn, metropolitan regions are the ones that display the most challenges to governance. We hypothesize that it is self-evident to bring the issues of governance and creativity together and assess or ex-

plore their potential interrelationships. The above-mentioned action model for metropolitan governance produces the conceptual framework for doing so: the model indicates that creativity is able to play a distinctive role for the three structuring systems of strategy, structures and culture.

4 When Creativity meets Governance – an Explorative Approach

The link between creativity and governance assumes shape as we take a closer look at two particular elements of creativity: creative people and creative tools. Both have the potential to be ingredients and contributors for the process of change in governance. Members of Florida's "creative core" are likely to be able to act as change agents to trigger transformation in the existing system. People who belong to "creative industries" have a cultural background shaped by hybrid business experiences; they are used to accommodating change processes, are accustomed to different high-level technologies, and other languages as well as the ability to "bring odd ends together". They are facilitators, modulators and transformers between the worlds of old economy hardware and network economy software.

From an instrument-based perspective, creative people generate and use creative artefacts. Referring to the field of spatial development, spatial design and spatial planning, visualization tools serve as helpful means to generate solutions for spatial processes. They deliver moving and still pictures, virtual real-time visualization or theme-world narratives. The products of creativity are thus support instruments for building the interface between creativity and governance.

Two fields of research at ETH Zurich provide examples for creative people and the use of their creative tools, namely visualization and sensualization methods in spatial development.

Landscape architects from ETH Zurich have developed the "movism" approach (Giro 2004). It is a specific mode for vi-

ualizing and designing landscapes in an age that is characterized by movement. The core idea is that landscape architecture has always been bound to a strong pictorial and aesthetic tradition. Thus, using the moving image of videos is considered an adequate and modern design approach that allows dealing with the character of urban peripheries. According to Giro (2004: 201), "movism is about looking at the world in a different, sometimes deranged way, to bring forth reactions and maybe even true sentiment in design".

The internationally known architects Herzog, de Meuron, Meili and Diener have established the Institute for the Contemporary City at ETH Zurich. They have chosen a visual approach on a regional scale as they come up with scenarios, images and maps to visualize possible futures for Switzerland. Their declared long-term goal is to "change the map in the head of Swiss population". With this approach, they attempt to overcome existing standards and political structures as they create visions and convince the observer with the power of their images. However, critics see a vacuum on the political level as they observe a missing exchange with institutions on the federal, cantonal and community levels (Tages-Anzeiger 27.2.2003: 59).

Both approaches, however valuable they are within their own profession and for the interested audience, leave questions as to how the activities and products are adequate for actual entrance to the strategies and culture of governance and how these will lead to changes in spatial development. The specific image language does not necessarily "hit the mark" of those who are in charge and have the power over spatial development. Danahy (2004), based on Soja's (1996) concept of "thirdspace", points out that, in spatial planning and design, besides the representation of spaces and the interpretation of the meaning of spaces, there is a third dimension of negotiation concerning contemporary urban landscapes. Danahy considers media as a means of enabling dialogue and negotiation. According to his point

of view, images are processes rather than products or objects. Soja's (1996) concept of "thirdspace" gives a hint that visualization and design tools do not automatically deliver an answer to the question on how to connect creativity and metropolitan governance.

Thus, the general question arises of the connectivity and adequacy of form and function, of strategy and structure. This leads us back to the action model for metropolitan governance: It conceptualizes governance using the three interconnected structuring systems of governance structures, governance strategies and governance culture. Our model thus provides an understanding of the interface where creativity is channelled into the actions of governance. The mindset and lifestyle of creative people can become part of the culture of governance, whereas the instruments and tools add to governance strategy and structures. The action model is about the management of a change process that offers openings for creativity to connect with governance.

5 Reality Check: Obstacles for Connecting Creativity to Governance

In the preceding sections, we looked at creativity and governance and the connectivity of both. The question remains as to whether there is a demand for creative tools in the "real world" and whether non-creative actors can deal with creative tools and relate to people from creative industries. Thus, in this section, we check our ideas against the background of the reality of governance as experienced in a current project.

As mentioned in the first section, the Swiss Federal Council launched its agglomeration policy in 2001 as part of an effort to support the cantons and communities in their activities to improve horizontal and vertical cooperation. The substantial goal of the policy is to strengthen the economic attractiveness of the densely populated, urbanized regions and provide higher life-quality for the inhabitants. In an initial phase, to get cooperation started and provide impulses for innovative projects in agglom-

eration areas within a very limited budget, the Federation is technically and financially supporting and encouraging "best practice models" all over Switzerland (Federal Council 2001).

The best practice model „Networkcity Glattal“ in the Zurich Metropolitan Region is one of 24 selected projects within this policy package. The project location is "Glattalstadt" (literally Glatt Valley City), a part of the Zurich Metropolitan Region comprising eight communities. This densely populated area between Zurich International Airport and the City of Zurich is one of the largest and most thriving economic centres in Switzerland. Changing dynamics have brought along the need for solutions for future spatial, economic and social development and the call for innovative governance.

The project is in the hands of the association „glow.dasGlattal“, a group of executive members of the Glattal communities, mostly mayors, who felt the need for an informal interest platform in addition to existing institutions. They put the project on the basis of a wider project organization by including representatives from the cantonal and federal levels. In addition, the association has mandated an external process management team of university members. The team provides support through developing strategies and adequate working methods. The participants of the best practice model are members of political boards and administrative units on community, regional and cantonal levels from the fields of environment, traffic planning, settlement development, social issues, as well as experts and representatives of interest groups.

The distinctive character of the project is its dual objective. On the content level, the goal of the actors is the shaping of an attractive, liveable region in the urbanized landscape. On the process level, the actors aim to establish forms of cooperation such as organizational structures and roles for communication as well as a shared perception of problems and tasks. The actors explicitly declared they wanted a learning project with an open process, not an additional planning project with a "hard" structure



Figure 2: Map of 24 best practice models in the Swiss Agglomeration Areas (shaded grey)

Source: Federal Office for Spatial Development 2003, www.are.admin.ch/are/de/raum/agglomerationstatistik/index.html, adaptation: L. Glanzmann, NSL

as a predefined product. They described the desired outcome as a «commitment package and action agreement», produced by all the participants.

To meet the objectives of the project leaders and participants, the process management team has helped design a best practice model process as a shared working and learning process. They structured it over several workshops, meetings and working phases that provided a creative and cooperative working atmosphere. A look at the "lessons learnt" from this process sheds some light on the gaps between the worlds of creativity and governance.

The best practice model process shows that there is a bias towards known planning tools and procedures. Visualization and interactive moderation methods are helpful, but have to be applied in adequate doses. Many participants are suspicious of an overload of visualization and moderation techniques that differ from the regular meetings in the usual political and administrative routines.

In order to add a more visual and creative approach to the best practice model, the process management team teamed up with a photography project of the Zurich Polytechnic Institute for Design and Art. The photography project

is pursuing matching interests, as it explores the specific application of city and landscape photography in planning processes. Even though photography is a well-known means of visualization, it took a number of negotiations with the project leaders and participants to agree to the contribution of the photographers to the project. Subsequently, some of the best practice model members changed from tolerating the photographers to actually using professional photography as a working tool. The main value of photography for politicians and planning administration was that the selection of themes triggered, clarified and supported discussion on spatial issues. The discussion on what should be photographed became a medium for communication.

The above example shows that the mutual benefits path of creativity and governance has just begun. Applying creative approaches needs to take into account the resistance to change or the "sunk cost", as economists put it. The actors in the best practice model have deeply rooted routines, institutions, insider networks and notions about what should or should not be done. Alongside a broad basis of knowledge, routines and existing networks, this situation causes an atmosphere of competi-

tion and the reflex to resist new forms of cooperation and procedures, "superimposed" by the best practice model. The integration of new working methods and different perspectives of looking at issues needs, in comparison to already invested resources, a great deal of convincing and building trust.

Other forces that exacerbate creativity are limited financial and personnel resources, which allow little space to develop and explore creativity. The leaders and participants of the best practice model are already carrying a full workload entering the process, and many politicians work on a voluntary basis or part-time. The time and energy allocated by the participants of the best practice model is at its upper limit, there is little space to float and allow creative exploration. A creative process is not considered a relief from the tasks at hand, but rather an additional workload along with additional uncertainties. There is a deficit in processing information and transforming it into adequate action. The danger of losing participants of the process or their active interest in the workshops is constantly present.

Last but not least, bringing creativity to a governance process means bringing creative people and administrative people together. In many cases, these are people with different ways of life, political orientations or visibly different clothing.

In the end, the best practice model process is moving slowly in a promising direction, taking very small steps. The promising relationship of governance and creativity is at the very beginning, it will need more pressure, time and maybe even a lack of resources to push creativity and governance closer together.

6 Bringing it all Together – Some Preliminary Conclusions

When creativity meets governance, chances are that they generate energy towards good metropolitan governance. However, creativity is a scarce resource, the connectivity between creativity and governance does not materi-

alize automatically. Only an action-oriented approach can make creativity fruitful for governance. In terms of the "model for metropolitan governance" we introduced in this paper, creativity has to become part of the three interconnected structuring systems of governance, that is, strategy, structures and culture. The model offers the conceptualization of a change process that provides openings for the connectivity between creativity and governance.

The particular links between governance and creativity are creative people and the creative culture and artefacts they produce. Still, their sheer existence is not sufficient to trigger changes in governance. Creative tools for the visualization of landscapes and spatial inter-dependencies are not self-explanatory to politicians or the public outside the professions of their creators. Moreover, today's low-level accessibility of ubiquitous visualization tools for a broad group of people does not necessarily bring about more creativity. Alongside the broad diffusion of creative opportunities, they have to match the need of the place-specific planning and change processes.

This points to a related issue: As we assess supply and demand for creativity, it becomes apparent that the demand is often smaller than the need. The management of change has to overcome obstacles that are rooted in the routines of processes of spatial development and governance. A "reality check" shows that there are certain prerequisites to allow change and to provide access for creativity: a high level of pressure for innovation that exceeds the sunk costs of no-action and a process design that allows space for mutual learning and creative exploration.

Finally, we want to point at what might be the most critical issue: Connectivity between creativity and governance is about people and their ability to communicate, and to learn and benefit from each other. It is necessary to have "change agents" in the form of open-minded people on either side who can serve as a "man-machine-governance" interface.

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