

## Strategic Navigation.

Par Jean Hillier. Le 23 février 2015



Imagine...

It is the middle of the ocean. Several people are paddling a raft. They are not shipwrecked, but have come together for some reason (it could be a race or a dare). It is a makeshift raft, with makeshift paddles. They do not know where they are very precisely and they are out of sight of land, trying to make headway in an ocean of varying currents, with varying waves, wind speeds and directions.

Their overall objective — or trajectory — is to reach land.

So, how might they go about getting there ? I argue that it is probably through a series of short-term projects, such as :

- trying to work out where they are. Where do they think they came from ? How might they have got here from there ? What elements, actants or forces influenced their getting here ? What can they remember ?
- trying to work out future potentialities. What are the elements involved and what are the interdependencies : the relations or connections (and disconnections) between them ? Which relations are likely to be more powerful ? With what implications ?

For instance :

- the condition of the raft and the paddles — these are very makeshift —, a bricolage of objects which need constant patching up ; parts fall off ; perhaps some chemicals in a plastic container are leaking and eating away the rope binding the raft together ;

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- the ocean and its currents — the “sailors” may anticipate the general direction of the currents but they cannot predict them ;
  - the weather — is it sunny ? stormy ? Does someone have knowledge about positions of stellar constellations ? Or is it too cloudy ?
  - the strength of the people on board the raft — this relates to availability of food, water, heat, body mass, physical and mental strength, and so on ;
  - desires of the people on board — to survive ; to be a hero ; to remain adrift just long enough to attract sponsorship for a book deal with potential film rights ;
  - chance (the aleatory) — eg hazards such as icebergs, containers lost overboard from ships ;
  - hope — of seeing a ship which stops with assistance for them ; that the blur on the horizon turns out to be land.

Having worked out the interdependencies between these (and other) elements, determinants or human and non-human actants, can the people on board tweak any of them so that the outcomes might be more favourable ? What experimentation might be productive ? Ditching a sick person to save food and water for the others ? Dumping the chemicals container to save the rope, although the container gives the raft extra buoyancy ? Making the raft look aesthetically attractive ?

The people will need to “live” or “belong” together, with flexibility and adaptability : in creative experimentation. Depending on circumstances and what seems to work (or not), they will probably change their means (eg making a sail, ditching a container), the direction they go in (eg someone thinks they see land far off to the left), and perhaps even their goals.

Of course, with several people on the raft, each with their own identity and culture, they probably will not agree on the direction they want to go in or the actions they should take to get there.

Making “headway” or “progress” involves processes of what I call “strategic navigation”, as described below. I argue that such processes resonate strongly with ideas of strategic spatial planning for metropolitan urban change.

In what follows, I briefly discuss strategic spatial planning in conditions of indeterminacy or uncertainty and a poststructuralist way of thinking about planning, before moving to develop a multiplanar theory of strategic spatial planning and to translate the theory into a methodology which might be useful for strategic planners in practice.

## **Strategic spatial planning in conditions of uncertainty.**

Strategic spatial plans have always been prepared and implemented in conditions of indeterminacy. Plans developed for the longer-term (such as 15 years or more in the UK) have traditionally reduced indeterminacy to uncertainty, which they then dealt with by reducing its dimensions in turn to those which could be managed and by either ignoring, “fudging” or deflecting other elements. However, as Balducci et al. demonstrate, “rapid changes in contemporary economic, environmental and social conditions are making policy-makers and politicians increasingly aware of the limitations of prescriptive, longer-range plans which specify precise targets for provision of

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industrial floorspace, housing units and so on” (2011, p. 481).

I regard traditional strategic spatial planning practices as failing to cope with uncertainty, let alone indeterminacy. Plans that present fixed rules or policies as blueprints for investment project a static picture of the future, which does not allow for a meaningful commitment to less precise goals, provisional advice and flexible, adaptive futures. Traditional, rational, modernist systems of spatial planning have resisted change and are often locked in to path-dependent ways of thinking and acting. Designed for situations of relative economic, environmental and social stability and predictability in which plans can serve as blueprints offering investors (including local residents) and developers the certainty they desire, strategic planning practices have failed to manage processes of urban transformation (Balducci et al. 2011).

Recognising the inevitably static nature of strategic spatial plans, frozen at the time of their adoption, John Friedmann (2004, p. 54) asks :

- “what sort of ‘guidelines’ can a plan provide that is already incongruent with the realities of the region by the time it is officially adopted ?” ;
- “is its purpose [...] not to provide effective guidance to operational planning but something else ? If so, what is it ?” ;
- “what would long-range ‘planning’ look like that does not necessarily terminate in visions, frameworks, and policy guidance for day-to-day decision making ?”.

As Prigogine with Stengers (1997) wrote in *The End of Certainty*, the world is inherently far-from-equilibrium and unstable. Therefore, “instability is necessary for development [...]. Situations that are ‘out of equilibrium’ are likely to be far more common than stable situations and are a necessity for development and progress” (De Roo 2010, p. 29). There is thus a need for planning theory and practices that engage with indeterminacy and uncertainty, with multiple possible alternative futures, recognise that people’s desires are likely to change over the life of a strategic spatial plan, and that many decisions need to be exploratory, experimental and adaptable.

The theory and methodology in the following sections represent an attempt to take forward theoretical and practical ideas about strategic spatial planning in indeterminacy and uncertainty. They serve as a bridge between the modernist worlds of strategic spatial planning which no longer work very well and the generation of a new, more promising orientation, grounded in poststructuralist thinking.

## **Exploring New Ways of Thinking Strategic Spatial Planning.**

There is a need for a more flexible form of strategic planning which, “must advance towards a future which is not known, which cannot be anticipated” (Derrida 1994, p. 37). Such planning work involves “taking risks, the consequences of which can be thought about, but cannot be known” (Healey 2008, p. 28).

I regard strategic spatial planning as a set of practices concerned with the future transformation of place, incorporating a folding together of social, environmental, economic and political values. I propose that its practice be concerned with trajectories or pathways rather than with specified end-

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points as tends to happen at present. I regard spatial planning as an experimental practice working with doubt and uncertainty, engaged with adaptation and creation — a speculative exercise — and I suggest a definition of spatial planning as strategic navigation along the lines of the investigation of “virtualities” unseen in the present ; the speculation about what may yet happen ; an inquiry into what we might think or do and how this might influence socially and environmentally just changes in spatial form (Hillier 2007).

In so doing, my thinking resonates with that of Michael Foucault :

[T]he metaphor of navigation [...] comprises several components. Firstly, the obvious idea of a journey (*trajet*), of effective movement from one point to another. Secondly, the idea of navigation implies that this movement is directed towards a certain goal, that it has an objective. [...] During the journey one encounters risks, unforeseen risks which may challenge your course or even get you lost. Consequently, the journey will be one which leads you to the place of safety through a number of known and little known, known and unknown, dangers. Finally, in this idea of navigation, I think that we should retain the idea that this journey to the port, across the dangers, implies — in order to be undertaken well and to reach its objective — knowledge, technique and art. Such knowledge is complex, both theoretical and practical. It is also conjectural, which is, of course, very close to the knowledge of piloting.

The idea of piloting as an art, as a theoretical and practical technique necessary to existence, is an idea that I think is important and which would merit analysis in more depth (Foucault 1982, p. 2, my translation).

Michel Foucault engaged the metaphor of ships and navigation (*pilotage*) on several occasions in his exploration of ideas of spatial planning/town planning and governance (1982, 1983a, 1983b, 1983c, 2005, 2007). I argue that such metaphors resonate strongly with conceptualisations of strategic spatial planning in indeterminate, complex circumstances. Echoing Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari refer to a “maritime model” in which “to think is to voyage” (1987, p. 482). Voyaging, for Deleuze and Guattari is “the manner of being in space, of being for space” (*ibid.*, p. 482). This is a conceptualisation of space as a passage : of change ; of in-between ; as a relation between actual and potential worlds (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, p. 17), which, I suggest, is how space should be recognised in strategic spatial planning.

The ocean — or global stream — which strategic spatial planners attempt to navigate is messy with indeterminacy ; with potentialities, possibilities and uncertainties, mostly beyond practitioners’ control. As Deleuze and Parnet suggest : “[e]verything is played in uncertain games” (1987, p. 147). Planning practice is replete with questions of normativity and judgement. For Deleuze, however, normativity should be an immanent process, rather than one relating to abstract universals of right and wrong, good and bad. Norms are inherently political and “right”, “wrong”, “good” and “bad” carry widely differing meanings for different people. As Deleuze comments, meaning is “relative and partial : that which agrees with our nature or does not agree with it” (1988b, p. 22). Judgement, therefore, should involve processes of “immanent evaluation, instead of judgement as a transcendent value” (Deleuze 1989, p. 141).

A judgement, such as a planning policy decision, is concerned with both the current situation to be changed (what is happening now) and also with creating new situations in the future (what will happen). But the specific moments in the future to which decisions refer are impossible to limit. Judgements/decisions should be immanent processes, working creatively with the flux of live

occasions (Hillier 2015). In strategic planning practice, however, the tendency is to produce long-term plans which are inflexible and unable to adapt to changing circumstances.

The UN-Habitat Report (2010) called for development of systems of planning which include provision of a flexible, “forward” long-range spatial plan consisting of broad frameworks and principles, with which detailed local plans and mega-projects should mesh. Such a “two-pronged” or, as I suggest, a multi-planar, approach facilitates adaptiveness or strategic navigation in environments where futures are indeterminate and complex.

## A multiplanar approach to strategic spatial planning.

I adopt the ontological conceptualisation of planes used by Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 265) who refer to planes as plans. In French the word “*plan*” refers to all of a plane (or plateau), a cinematic “shot” (long-shot or close-up) and a plan, scheme or project. Deleuze typically uses the plane for a type of thinking which mediates between “the chaos of chance happenings [...] on the one hand, and structured, orderly thinking on the other” (Stagoll 2005, p. 204). As such, his ideas are extremely relevant to the theory and practice of spatial planning.

A multiplanar practice approach to strategic spatial planning would incorporate a broad trajectory of possible scenarios, developed and debated democratically, inclusively and deliberatively, to “rehearse” possible futures and their perceived advantages and disadvantages to actants (humans and non-humans) in localised and non-localised event-relations and event-spaces. Deliberation would involve identifying relations of responsibility across time-space (see Gunder and Hillier 2007, Hillier 2007).

As Deleuze and Guattari write, “perhaps there are two planes, or two ways of conceptualising the plane” (1987, p. 265). These are the planes of immanence (Deleuze and Guattari 1994) and of organisation (Deleuze and Guattari 1987)[1]. I suggest that broad, longer-term trajectories of strategic spatial planning may be inspired by planes of immanence, whilst shorter-term, local-scale detailed plans and major projects may be more appropriate to planes of organisation. (See Figure 1)

<u>Plane of Immanence</u>	<u>Plane of Organisation</u>
becomings/emergence	transcendent teleology
open-ended trajectories	closed goals
multiplicities of meshworks	hierarchical relations of power
chance/aleatory	planned development
chaotic smooth space (with some regulation/striation)	regulated striated space (with some chaos/smoothness)
unstructured	structured
dynamism of unformed elements	stability of judgement and identity
flux and fluidity	inertia or sluggish movement
power to	power over

Figure 1 : Schematic Descriptors of the Planes of Immanence and Organisation. Sources : adapted from Hillier 2007, p. 243.

### Planes of Immanence.

Longer-term trajectories resonate with what Deleuze and Guattari (1994) call the plane of immanence, as outlined in Hillier (2007, 2011). The broad plane of immanence is defined not by what it contains, but “rather by the forces that intersect it and the things it can do” (Kaufman 1998, p. 6). It is the temporary product of a mapping of forces (see below). As Kaufman (*ibid.*) continues, such mapping “is at once the act of charting out a pathway and the opening of that pathway to the event of the chance encounter”.

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The plane is an object of construction ; a practice (Bonta and Protevi 2004) which maps and records performance of actants' desires : "a disorganised flux that allows itself to be coded" (Colebrook 2002, p. 114). The plane is open to "new connections, creative and novel becomings that will give it new patterns and triggers of behaviour" (Bonta and Protevi 2004, p. 62-63). It is a virtual realm of potentials. The key is to construct a plane by inclusive and collaborative experimentation.

The plane of immanence is a praxis that leaves the ends of each line of knowledge open to extension (Skott-Myhre 2005) ; not something closed or the end of a process. A plane (long-term strategic plan or trajectory) of foresight ; of creative transformation, of what might be. Chance is important, however. We should not forget the potential for unforeseen challenges and opportunities to emerge (for example, credit crises, increases in fuel prices, and so on). The plane "functions like a sieve over chaos" (Boundas 2005, p. 273), implying a sort of "groping experimentation" (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, p. 41) of multiplicities of concepts, many of which never come to be as originally intended (Hillier 2011).

### **Planes of Organisation.**

Shorter-term plans or project briefs resonate with Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) planes of organisation, which support day-to-day elements of personal and social life. These planes contain hierarchical power relations which regulate or codify our worlds and fix identities. This is a teleological plane, concerned with the development of forms and the formation of subjects, in which an anterior purpose pre-exists individual (planning) decisions and is supported by stability of judgement and identity.

The plane of organisation is a master plan or blueprint with certain goals for development. These goals are predetermined standards to which things are submitted in judgement and ordered by forms of representation. Local area action plans, design briefs, detailed projects are typical planes of organisation. They tend to be relatively local or micro-scale, short-term and content specific. They facilitate small movements or changes along the dynamic, open trajectories of planes of immanence (Hillier 2011).

The planes of immanence and organisation exist simultaneously and are intertwined; sometimes fairly closely and sometimes more loosely. We inhabit both planes at once. Multiplanar theory thus comprises broad trajectories or "visions" — such as sustainability, habitability and so on — as frames of reference which provide justification and navigational context for short and medium-term substantive actions, such as major projects.

Multiplanar theory offers the potential for multiple plans (Hillier 2007, 2011) :

- several (or one collectively preferred) trajectories or "visions" of the longer-term future, including concepts towards which human and non-human actants "desire" to navigate, such as sustainability (Deleuze and Guattari's planes of immanence) ;
- shorter-term, location-specific detailed plans and projects with collaboratively determined tangible goals, for example, for city centre regeneration, provision of affordable housing and so on (Deleuze and Guattari's planes of organisation).

Navigating strategically across multiple planes requires practitioners to sense and discern connections and patterns in what is taking place, to try to understand the underlying dynamics and

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interdependencies between elements, to appreciate the diverse possibilities of what is happening and what might happen, and to respond by designing actions which align with the intentions and values of the agreed longer-term strategic trajectory (Hames 2007a, p. 114), but which are contextually appropriate, not copy/pastes of other, previous or “best” practices (Hillier 2011, p. 508). Short-term and long-term actions are not mutually exclusive. Decisions are inherently political, concerned with choices about regulation, or, as Rabinow writes, “how, given a series of elements in a multivalent and transferable cadre, to bring them together such that, in all likelihood, they will prosper in an orderly, efficient, and coherent way” (2003, p. 361).

In order to translate the above ideas into questions that strategic spatial planning practitioners might consider, I argue for an emphasis on the relational dynamics of forces. Analysis entails first, making detailed tracing of the conditions of possibility of how things/places/problems came to be constituted as products of particular contingencies through unfolding power-laden relations between elements, and second, of mapping these power-relations into the future. As such, there is a need to identify the determinants or drivers of change, the interdependencies or relations between these determinants and between them and actants. Understanding and anticipating relational and provisional constitutions of power is important in strategic spatial planning.

## A Cartographic Toolbox for Multiplanar Practice.

The Deleuzian notion of planning, as an experiment affected by and affecting forces of space and time, is useful. As Deleuze suggests, “the most centralised state is not at all the master of its plans, it is also an experimenter, it performs injections, it is unable to look into the future” (Deleuze and Parnet 1987, p. 145). It is particularly unable to anticipate the “experimenters of another kind, thwarting predictions” (*ibid.*).

Deleuze and Guattari regarded themselves “always as geographers” (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, p. 83). Explicitly acknowledging the work of American geographer Lewis Mumford, (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 457), theirs is a preternaturally spatial body of theory. They use a spatial vocabulary to explain and theorise contingent relations of practice. As such they develop what they call a *cartography* to identify the power of networks and trajectories through which various human and non-human actants have territorialised relational space.

Cartography plots lines of entanglement between knowledge and power, discourses of practices, materialities of seeing, telling and doing, and it conjectures how connections or foldings together, and/or disconnections or unfoldings might occur and impact social surfaces (Bosteels 2001). I argue that an analytic cartography inspired by Deleuze and Guattari can help planners to understand the micropolitics of power in connection with broader political, social and environmental structures and conditions of possibility.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 146) describe their cartography as comprising four components :

- the generative component — the *tracing* of concrete mixed semiotics and pointing towards the potentiality of what might emerge ;
- the transformational component — making a transformational *map* of assemblages, *agencements*, regimes and their possibilities for translation and creation ;
- the *diagrammatic* component of the relational forces that are in play “either as potentialities or as

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effective emergences” ;

– the machinic component — the outline of programmes of what new assemblages and/or *agencements* might emerge ?

The term “assemblage” here indicates a network of generally non-directional, disparate groups of humans and non-humans. *Agencement* implies that a network of actants generates agency and strategy (Hillier 2011, p. 508).

A cartographic method would commence by making a tracing. It would then put the tracing on a transformational map of potentialities, making diagrams of the relational forces that play in each case. It would then outline a programme of assemblages and of what might take place. This programme functions as a point of support for the task of strategic plan- and policy-making.

To *trace* entails looking back retrospectively in a systematic manner. To trace or analyse a social formation involves disentangling or unfolding “the variable lines and singular processes that constitute it [...] : their connections and disjunctions, their circuits and short-circuits and, above all, their possible transformations” (Smith 2003, p. 307).

Tracing “how did something come to be” involves asking questions about its conditions of possibility, such as “what knowledges, emotions or desires drove this situation ?”, “what relations existed between which humans and non-humans ?”, “what games of power were played ?”. Tracing explores how elements, processes and events respond to both their own logics and to external pressures and stimuli. It is an exploration of the relations, associations and encounters between human and non-human elements, events and structures : between, for example, private capital, national and international agencies of governance and interest groups, scientists, environmentalists and so on, and flows of information, actualised in materialities and discursivities such as reports, meetings, demonstrations, etc. It is an “analysis of how forces of different types come to inhabit the same field” (Due 2007, p. 145).

Tracing overlays the product of something onto the process of its production. It can be usefully performed at the micropolitical site level, analysing the conditions of possibility within which situations and sites have been constituted. Tracing relations is vital. As Deleuze (1995) describes, tracing the lines rather than the points. Deleuzian tracing resonates with that of Michel Foucault’s concept of genealogy in that it asks “what is the nature of our present ?” (Foucault 1984, p. 34-37, cited in Chan 2000, p. 1059) It asks “how did something come to be ?”, “what were the conditions of possibility ?”, “what were the drivers of its actualisation in this way ?”.

To *map* involves discovery and perception of landmarks, useful for orientation purposes as something to head towards — “a way of marking out the territory on the road” and “a furtive glance sideways into an undecidable future” (all quotations Bosteels 2001, p. 895). A map is oriented toward experimentation.

Deleuzoguattarian maps are concerned with creative potential. The issue is not to attempt to define long-term detailed programmes of action, but to raise questions of potential agency and of socio-economic-political and institutional conditions of change (Hillier 2011).

Projected trajectories do not guarantee actual progression, however. Massumi suggests that “[t]he most that can or should be done is to enumerate ways in which becoming might be mapped” (1992, p. 103). These “ways” might be democratically and inclusively negotiated and agreed strategies, or



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“pragmatic guidelines serving as landmarks to future movement” (*ibid.*). This means that we trace human and non-human assemblages, encounters, power plays, and so on, and notice where any blockages, oppositions, or resistances have affected policy decisions and implementation. These tracings become part of the map. It is a question of mapping their trajectory generatively to see what they might yet be capable of.

Mapping generates “a set of various intersecting lines” (Deleuze 1995, p. 33) or *diagram* concerned with the dynamic interrelation of relations (Massumi 1992). Diagrams act as modulators or intercessors between ideas and what may become. They create possibilities ; imaginary alternative worlds which promise something new ; a hope of living otherwise (Bogue 2003, p. 177). By mapping connections between different relations of force onto a diagram, one may be able to anticipate the potential distribution of “the power to affect and the power to be affected” (Deleuze 1988a, p. 73) : the power of force relations between the various elements associated with the metaphorical raft above.

Cartography as a process would request strategic planners to map the proliferating interconnections between elements onto a diagram, to experiment with them and anticipate potential tensions and conflicts. What new assemblages might eventuate ? By asking “what might happen if... ?”, strategic planners cannot predict as such, but they may be alerted to as-yet unknown potentialities (*ibid.*, p. 1-2). It is a question of mapping the trajectories to see whether they might be capable of acquiring enough agency “to turn around a situation” (Guattari 1986, p. 102), or what kind of “opportunity structure” they might offer for spatial strategy-making.

Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) fourth cartographic, *machinic* or programming, component concerns the evaluative study of diagrams, assemblages and their potentialities, with a view to intervening strategically. As Bogue describes, this is “both a process of exploring and hence constructing connections among differences, and a process of undoing connections in an effort to form new ones” (2007, p. 10). It is not a process of standing back and describing, but of entering the relations between elements and “tweaking” as many as possible in order to get a sense of what may emerge (Massumi 2002, p. 207). Such an “art of organising encounters” (Hardt 1993, p. 110) involves guessing “what decisions to make, when to make them, who to involve, and how in a context of dynamically complex change” (Hames 2007a, p. 197). Within the limitations of normativity discussed earlier, it would entail attempting to select and to facilitate — or strategically navigate towards — potentially “good” encounters and to avoid “bad” ones, mindful that there is no transcendental scale, but only relative “good” and “bad” for specific entities. This is a pragmatic exercise in which strategic planners would attempt to intervene and manipulate relational forces and their potential connections, conjunctions and disjunctions, their possible trajectories, mutations. In other words, to diagnose emergences or becomings (Bergen 2006, p. 109). This is, of course, impossible. The future is a social construction in which nothing eventuates precisely as anticipated ; “Becoming is directional rather than intentional” (Massumi 1992, p. 95). The aleatory is often a powerful force. Strategic planning involves “working with odds, guesses, predictions and judgements but not ever with certainty” (Rose 2007, p. 468). Yet, judgements must be made and decisions taken.

Diagrams, then, allow us “to find our bearings in thought” (Zdebik 2003, p. 2). The virtual of the space in the diagram has potential to actualise in concrete reality. It is at this point that agents may and do intervene in practice to “tweak” in a world where many institutions regard “emergence” as “emergency” ; where emergences must be monitored, evaluated and regulated so that they do not become threatening to governments, citizens and businesses (eg Dillon 2002, 2008, Krebs 2002a,

2002b, 2008). Agencies, such as police, counter-terrorist organisations, MI6, the CIA and US Defense Force, attempt to anticipate “bad” events-to-come in order to avoid them or to limit their “surprise” by planning how to react (Dillon 2008). As White et al. state, risk prediction strategy “consists of reconfiguring relationships among and capacities of identities in order to anticipate and respond to perceived [...] threats” (2007, p. 192). Nevertheless, in attempts to manipulate the aleatory, we must not forget that any diagram is always “an incomplete abstraction” drawn from a “restricted point of view” (Massumi, 1992, p. 68) constrained by the ideology of the drawing actant. Diagrams are always a form of representation of the drawer’s desire, inevitably haunted by the excluded and the unknown outside and the endless potential for politics and resistance. This raises several ethical issues. Who gives planning — and other — practitioners the authority to judge which are “good” and which are “bad” actants, encounters and potentialities ? Whose definition of “good” or “bad” is employed ? As Deleuze (1988b) suggests, different meanings of good and bad arise from differences in the forces that produce the meanings. Transparent, inclusionary, democratic decision-making is crucial so that actants can clearly understand who and what stands to gain or lose from organised encounters.

## Strategic Navigation.

Returning to Michel Foucault’s (1982, p. 2) theorising about “pilotage” and his use of the metaphor of navigation, in this section I outline the concept of strategic spatial planning as strategic navigation[2], adapting the term from Richard Hames’s work on organisational management.

Resonating strongly with Deleuzian-inspired tracing and mapping cartography, Hames defines strategic navigation as “the art of confidently and ethically finding viable paths into the future, negotiating unknown terrain and unprecedented complexity while retaining integrity and relevance” (2007a, p. 228-229). He advocates a methodology of “strategy-as-process” — “a continuous braiding of intelligence creation with insightful action” (Hames 2007a, p. 81)

Strategic navigation is a collaborative conversation that weaves between specific episodes and local or micro stories, the networks and coalitions of governance processes, and the macro of governance cultures (Healey 2007, p. 21-23). Hames (2007a) depicts this conversation as a strategic-learning spiral (adapted here as a more open rhizome) of sensing, making sense and designing and enacting (Figure 2).

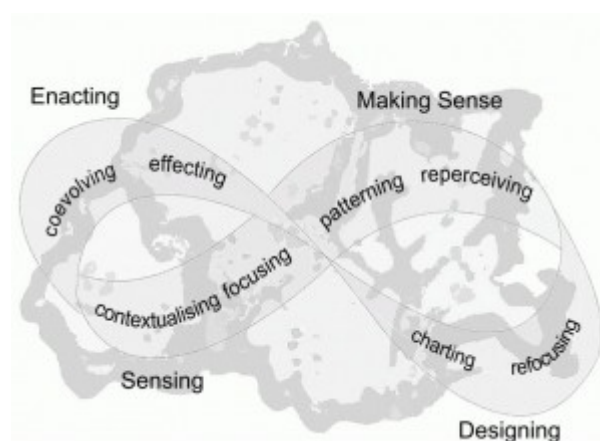


Figure 2 : Strategic Navigation. Sources : adapted from Hames 2007b, p. 6.

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I regard Hames's conversation of sensing as resonating strongly with Deleuzian tracing, of making sense and designing with Deleuzian mapping and diagramming and enacting with Deleuzian machining.

Hames suggests that practitioners ask strategic questions aimed at sensing or tracing not only the driving forces in play behind different behaviours, but also why actants see and explain the world as they do (elements of *Contextualising* and *Focusing*). In making sense, the element of *Patterning* integrates the different perspectives and knowledges derived from *Contextualising* and *Focusing* into understandings of what is happening and what might happen if. *Reperceiving* and *Refocusing* would entail foresight-based designing or diagramming of issues and implications, from which "leverage points" are identified and pertinent responses are designed in a strategic 'plan' component (*Charting*). Enacting or machining incorporates continuous reflexion, reperception and revision of information, ideas and intentions as new knowledges emerge, circumstances alter and decisions change the context and issue focus (*Effecting* and *Co-evolving*).

In relation to these elements, I offer some possible issues and questions for consideration.

*Contextualising* performs understanding of the context in which strategic planning is to take place; a sensing of what is going on and how things came to be. Questions include :

- what are the key characteristics of the socio-economic-political environment ? In what materialities and discursivities are they actualised ?
- what are the critical relationships between these characteristics ?
- what were their conditions of possibility ? How did they come to be ? What did human and non-human actants say, write, perform ? Why ? What were the impacts on other actants ?
- what were the dynamics of force relations between actants ?
- what changed ? Why ?

*Focusing* arrives at an initial, shared understanding of critical issues. Questions include :

- what are the most strategically significant issues requiring attention ? Why ? What ideologies or mindsets prevail ?
- what are the relationships between these and other issues ?
- what relationships matter most ? Why ?
- what most concerns key decision makers ? Why ?
- what control or influence can planners exercise over these issues and their relationships ?
- what assumptions lead us to these conclusions ? How do planners subjectivate themselves and other actants ?
- do other actants share these conclusions ? What are their subjectivations ?

*Patterning* integrates different perspectives and new knowledges into planners'

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understandings of what is happening and might happen in the future. Questions include :

- what patterns of change can we identify ? Are force relations changing between actants ? Are mindsets changing ?
- how and why are these patterns changing ? What connections and disconnections are occurring ? How are changes manifest by discourses and materialities ?
- what are the gaps in our current thinking and knowing ?
- where can we get the information from ?
- are there other ways of perceiving the issues which raise different questions, problems, opportunities ?

*Reperceiving* involves deepening awareness and understanding through finding new ways to view issues. Foresighting or prospective exercises can offer multiple perspectives on alternative futures. Outcomes can significantly change beliefs about what is important to actants. Questions include :

- what new insights can be gleaned from the various prospectives ? What might happen if... ?
- what are the conditions of possibility of the various prospectives ? What ideological commitments, assumptions, blockages, oppositions might actualise ?
- what are the key relations between human and non-human actants ?
- how may force relations play out in the future ?
- what changes might there be and why ?
- what implications do these insights have for strategic spatial planning ?

*Refocusing* examines what, from the prospectives investigated, could be more or less likely to take place and could be more or less strategically important and why. Refocusing filters attention. Questions include :

- what are the most significant issues requiring attention ?
- what specific factors make these issues critical and why ? What force relations are important ?
- how might these issues be addressed ?
- does the planning system have the capacities to address these issues ?
- what other actants should be involved ?
- what should plans address in the short-term (plane of organisation) and long-term (plane of immanence) and why ?

*Charting* involves preparing appropriate plans. Questions include :

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- what strategies are possible ?
  - what strategies might become possible in the short or longer-term future, how and why ?
  - what are the possible consequences, risks and opportunities of these strategies ?
  - how can strategic plans be prepared so that the appropriate planning authority remains responsive and adaptive ?
  - how can the linkages between the components of the strategic plans be described ?
  - do the strategies address key leverage points for implementation ?

*Effecting* implements the plans. Questions to consider before implementation include :

- how will we know if the plans are effective in navigating towards our strategic intentions ?
- what would be an appropriate monitoring system ?
- how would we accommodate requirements for systemic change in the plans ?
- what are we unaware of that may cause problems in the future ?

*Co-evolving* enables adaptation of practice and plans in the light of changes caused by those practices and plans. Questions include :

- what signals will indicate that a fundamental change is occurring in the context from which we defined the strategic plans ?
- what may be the critical, unintended consequences of our plans ?
- do we need to think differently about our strategic intentions ?
- are we ignoring any force relations, connections or actants that might be critical ?
- do our plans need to change ?

(adapted from Hames 2007a, 2007b, Hillier 2011)

Continuous monitoring is required to ensure both that shorter-term plans and projects do not veer off the broader trajectory of the longer-term vision, seduced either by path dependencies of conventional thinking and inertia or “the latest flavour of the month” (Hames 2007a, p. 250), perhaps for yet another iconic building or retail centre.

## **An anexact yet rigorous practice.**

The task of strategic spatial planning is difficult : to “produce something that doesn’t yet exist and about which we cannot know how and what it will be” (Foucault 1991, p. 121). Traditional, modernist processes of strategic spatial planning centred on control or reduction of uncertainty and provision of investor certainty, demand not only a renewed critique, but a creative means of

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rethinking strategic planning, what it does and how. In other words, strategic spatial planning practice rethought as cartography : pragmatic, not programmatic (Massumi 2010, p. 3).

Strategic spatial planning should provide opportunities for the emergence of the not-yet and of people-to-come. It should be a speculative and creative, yet structured, experimentation in the spatial (Hillier 2007, 2011). As such, long-term strategic planning — planning on the plane of immanence — could be a more inclusive, democratic, open and creative imagination of the past-present-future where there is foresighting of potential future scenarios and collaborative, critical discussion in ongoing conversations about their potential consequences for different human and non-human actants. Planes of organisation contain hierarchical power relations which temporarily both regulate our worlds and fix identities as they support the everyday segmentarities of life. Appropriate plans tend to be relatively local, short-term and relatively content-specific. They facilitate small movements (local area plans, major projects) along the dynamic trajectories of planes of immanence.

Improvisation and adaptability are important in forms of strategic planning practices which would be concerned with strategically navigating journeys or trajectories rather than destinations or end-points and with establishing the conditions for the development of alternatives. This would be a pragmatic, Deleuzian-inspired cartographic approach. It would be bureaucratically and politically unsettling and “risky” however, as it would entail accepting that policy outcomes are experimental and unpredictable. Deleuzian cartography thus offers potential for an “anexact” practice of strategic navigation, “open and connectable in all its dimensions” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 12), for those “who want to *do* something with respect to new uncommon forces, which we don’t quite yet grasp” (Rajchman 2000, p. 6).

By problematising specific practices and tracing relationalities (the connections and disconnections between elements), by making visible the various discourses and materialities, the power-plays and so on, we can develop an understanding of the roles of actants (both human and non-human) in what took place. Looking at the relations between elements (the Deleuzian lines) rather than at the elements themselves (the points), would be relatively new practice for most spatial planning practitioners, but by tracing the multiplicity of ways in which actants attempt to generate and express power through subjectivating others (eg through constraining their choices etc), through their material organisation (eg their laws, committee decisions etc) and through their discourses, we can begin to unfold the contingent systems which were actualised.

Tracing — Hames’s (2007a) sensing (contextualising and focusing) — offers us a temporarily stabilised grid of reference for understanding what took place, which practitioners can then make sense of through patterning and re-perceiving issues, deepening their awareness and understanding. Emphasis then shifts to designing — mapping the diagonals or transversals across lines, to diagram potentialities. Planners would “map out a range of circumstances” (Deleuze 1995, p. 26), situations and relations or lines (strategic plans) representing desired virtualities of future development. Then comes experimentation. Creativity is experimental, testing out relations, recognising the limitations of particular constraints and attempting to work with enabling constraints where possible : refocusing. Planners have to operate through some reductive, perspectival stabilisation of indeterminacy simply in order to cope. Some codification is inevitable (charting) as plans include “just a little order to protect us from chaos” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, p. 201). Even so, no matter how much we map, diagram and chart spaces of possibilities, there will always be the unknown. Machining or enacting (effecting and co-evolving) becomes reflexive and adaptive as changes in context, agents and structures occur.

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A Deleuzian-inspired practice of strategic navigation would perform “an art of inhabiting the intervals, where new foldings arise to take our forms of inhabitation in new and uncharted directions” (Rajchman 1998, p. 32). It would be an ethical practice oriented towards what might become or emerge rather than with pre-determined goals. Translating from Deleuze’s definition of a “good” life, a “good” strategic plan would be “able to transform itself depending on the forces it encounters, [...] always opening up new possibilities” (Smith 1998, p. xv). Planning by strategic navigation is potentially

an inclusive, democratic “what might happen if... ?” approach which allows disparate points of view to co-exist ; which has a concern for indeterminate essences rather than ordered ones ; for emergent properties rather than fixed ones ; and for intuition and uncertainty, multiplicity and complexity rather than systematic predictabilities. (Hillier 2011, p. 523)

Strategic spatial planning by strategic navigation is a practice of risk-taking, of not being in total control, of transcending the technicalities of planning practice which demands that strategic spatial planners “step outside what’s been thought before, [...] venture outside what’s familiar and reassuring, [...] to invent new concepts for unknown lands” (Deleuze 1995, p. 103) and to allow possibilities for something new to emerge. As Rajchman (1998, p. 33) suggests, “the aim of the game is not to rediscover the eternal or the universal but to find the conditions under which something new may be created”.

“Conventional strategic planning is dead ! In a world where strategy is a commodity, navigation and imagination become the critical factors.” (Hames 2007a, p. 229)

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## Note

[1] In this paper, I refer to the planes of immanence and organisation as these resonate with planning scholars and practitioners more strongly and with less confusion than the other terms which Deleuze and Guattari used — the planes of consistency (1987) and transcendence (1994) respectively.

[2] For more detail see Hillier (2011).

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