

Territorial Planning Experimentation in Québec

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Résumé

Au cours des quatre dernières décennies, le Québec a expérimenté différentes procédures de planification territoriale. Exercices de planification largement concernés par l'allocation rationnelle des ressources publiques en ciblant fortement sur la dimension stratégique. Comme l'illustre ce texte, chaque expérience a généré des résultats intéressants sous l'angle des contenus classiques. Si plusieurs leçons sont distillées par l'auteur, la séparation distincte dans le processus de planification entre les stratèges et les acteurs cause des effets pervers qui doivent être corrigés afin que la planification supporte davantage les initiatives de développement. L'auteur propose de considérer une forme de planification territoriale plus innovatrice, ancrée dans la théorie bien sûr mais aussi basée sur l'expérience des dernières décennies.

Mots clés: Vision; stratégie; action; interaction; innovation; planification territoriale; Québec

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Abstract

Over the last four decades, Québec has experimented with different procedures for territorial planning, which have been largely concerned with the rational allocation of public resources while focussing strongly on a strategic framework. Each experiment generated interesting results in term of classical contents that are presented and analysed in this paper. The separation in the planning process between strategists on one side, and actors on the other, has created perverse effects that must be corrected in order to better support development initiatives. The author proposes a more innovative form of planning for Québec's territories, grounded in theory and also based on the experimentation of the last few decades.

Key words: Vision; strategy; action; interaction; innovation; territorial planning; Québec

Of the various territories of Québec occupied by human settlements, the Québec City citadel, the Saint-Maurice forging mills, the shipyards and several *seigneuries*, as well as certain areas of colonial development in the Laurentides, were planned in early stages. The systematic exploitation of the watersheds of the Saguenay region in order to feed the Arvida industrial complex, including factories, city, port and railroad, represents a clear example of systematic planning for the production of aluminum. Other industrial towns were similarly planned, such as Lachine, Noranda, Asbestos, Murdochville and Fermont. There was also the famous Vautrin plan, concerned with the opening of new agro-forest parishes in the 1930s. After 1945, a certain number of operational plans for the implementation of infrastructure and public equipment were elaborated sporadically throughout the territories. Planning then guided the main interests of territorial public interventions. Thus, several cities were equipped with town-planning programs, where certain sites or zones also received planners' systematic attention. Since the 1960s, territorial planning has become widely and formally adopted, using procedures offered by the theory of planning.

The main question addressed in this paper relates to the effects generated by the formal use of planning procedures on the intra-national territories of Québec. Despite some radical experiments, territorial planning has been largely concerned with the rational allocation of public resources. The contents of each experiment will be presented and analysed through theoretical components in outlining some relevant lessons. Future stakes for territorial planning will then be considered.

Forms of Territorial Planning

We can define territorial planning as being the addition of rationality to the collective decision-making on the intra-national scales of central State. The definitions presented in scientific works are obviously numerous while converging, in general, towards the traditional principle of “connection between knowledge and action” (Meyerson and Banfield 1955, 72). In reality, this connection is registered as “the application of the scientific method to the collective decision-making” (Faludi 1987, 14). In this spirit of marriage between rationality and actions, John Friedmann (1973, 1987, 1992) distinctly identifies three great forms of territorial planning: radical, allocative and innovative.

The radical form is based on certain values and collectively selected community purposes as a preliminary, and refers to the deep structural transformation of the territory being planned. This form of planning is viewed as the philosophical heritage of the traditional thinkers who sought to change overall social, cultural, political and economic realities, based on reason. Its use becomes possible when supported by an important social movement anchored in actions that are, if not revolutionary, at least radical. Planning then reveals itself to be a highly political activity, at least at the beginning of the process. According to analysts of this perspective, the effective transformation of society can be carried out only through the mobilization of the population. A certain degree of social disorder is required to incite, disturb and push back conservative and reactionary forces that are generally very active in maintaining the present order.

A contrario, allocative planning asserts itself as a typically functional planning whose main objective is to manage reality. It is based on principles of order and hierarchy and sustains the correct operation, maintenance and reproduction of the territorial system. Reflection on values, collective realities and goals is generally not included in the processes which are deployed within *a priori* accepted standards. It focuses rather on concrete means of allocating available resources in a satisfactory way. Largely adopted by modern bureaucracies, this form of planning generally uses a rigid style of control to organise medium and long term actions.

Finally, innovative planning seeks to introduce small constant changes in territories facing external stakes in continual turbulence. It is concerned with collective realities, goals and main societal trends as well as concrete actions. According to specialists, the innovation generated by territorial planning theoretically requires a normative potential, a certain degree of financial and decision-making autonomy and the capacity to mobilize and organize available resources for new uses. This form of planning continuously seeks territorial balance between order and disorder, between bureaucracy and policy, statics and dynamics. In this spirit, innovative planning becomes a median formula between the two other forms.

Contents of Territorial Planning

Rooted in the ideal of rational comprehensive planning, the techniques and tools available for building territorial visions are now very sophisticated (Shipley 2000). They allow the detailed observation of the territory's current situation, and the determination of its true strengths, weaknesses, threats, and new possibilities as well as constraints to their actualization. Largely renewed in recent decades (Friend and Jessop 1969; Porter 1981) traditional strategic frameworks try to make territorial planning processes responsible and logical in order to guide the implementation of actions (Flyvbjerg 2003). Associated with the inherent sociability of human beings, interaction represents the basis of collective organization and community life. Dialogue, exchanges of opinion and the elaboration of shared systems of logic represent the attributes of the interaction (Friedmann 2003) that is proposed through the "territorial collective brain" (Perrin 1983), "connective planning" (Friend, Power and Yewlett 1974), "inter-organisational networks" (Mulford 1983), "community co-operation" (Jessop and Weaver 1987), "network activities" (Proulx 1989), or "partnership" (Klein 1992). Finally, operational decision-making leading to actions refers us to a universal doctrine determining the progress of humanity. These processes were greatly improved in recent decades with the increasing quality of the feasibility studies for projects before decision and implementation.

Territorial planning basically has four explicit dimensions which enable us to classify the theoretical and practical procedures according to their content requirements. These dimensions are: global vision; strategic frameworks; interaction dynamics; and operational decision-making. Our analysis of Québec's experiments will consider this typology.

In reality, these four dimensions represent the main properties or potential qualities recognized in the practice of territorial planning. A certain number of territorial planning procedures exist in scientific literature for the application of these dimensions. Following the syntheses of Faludi (1973), Camhis (1979), Friedmann (1987) and Campbell and Fainstein (2003), we gather these procedures into four main categories according to their dominant property or dimension: rational comprehensive planning, disjointed incrementalist planning, strategic planning and interactive planning (Proulx in press).

Application in Québec

In spite of several quite valid specific exercises carried out in the past in Québec, planning was systematically applied to intra-national territories only from the 1960s on. The assertion of the interventionist role of the Québécois State at the time caused the generalized implementation of planning (Proulx 1996, 2002).

General or particular diagnoses were numerous in highlighting national strategic targets: natural resources, education, industries, transport, health and social services, community saving, urbanization, rural migration, etc. It then appeared clearly to specialists that the State would need to develop a more detailed vision of the various territories forming its national space, in order to be able to judiciously intervene in them (Simard 1979). Several stakes, typically relating to space, were thus raised: the inconsistency and incompatibility of certain developments, as well as the migratory erosion of certain spaces (La Haye 1968); spatialized social injustices (Fortin 1965); the lack of regional innovative initiatives (Hirsch 1967); multiple divisions of public administration sites (Dugas 1984); and insufficient responsibility taken by local and regional elites (Parenteau 1964, 1970). The goals of territorial planning were then deduced from these stakes while being presented as imperfections to correct through the contemporary forces of the market and politics.

Since this awakening, several formal territorial planning exercises (Figure 1) were carried out using the above mentioned theoretical procedures, or alternatives of those which are generally understood as procedural mixtures (Proulx 1996, 2008). This was the case with the well-known experiment of the *Bureau d'Aménagement de l'Est du Québec* (BAEQ, the Eastern Québec Planning Office) which, inspired by the famous Tennessee Valley experiment, largely mobilized the Gaspé community in a spirit of communal organization to deliver an ambitious action plan in 1966. Other territorial planning processes occurred at the same time, each with its own procedures, particularly within some cities, industrial parks, regions and sub-regions. Various results were presented to the public, private and community decision makers of these planned territories.

Figure 1
Procedures of Territorial Planning Used in Québec

- Comprehensive Planning of BAEQ
- Mission of Regional Planning
- Diagram of Regional Development
- Diagram of *Municipalité Régionale de Comté's* Land Use Planning
- Socio-Economic Conference
- Strategic Planning
- Excellence in strategic sectors

During this initial period, the administrative regions were divided on the basis of monographs produced by geographers (Brouillette 1959; Dugas 1986; Harvey 2001). This regional division was then followed in 1979 by the second supra-local division of the Province of Québec in *Municipalité Régionale de Comté* (MRC)

territories (Tellier 1982; Fortin and Parent 1983; Proulx 1992). More formal processes of territorial planning were recommended in these intra-national areas, including traditional municipalities. Missions, projects, summits, forums, diagrams, commissions and other operations were implemented according to a precise procedure in this territorial planning spirit. The elaborate plans were then multiplied by territorial scales and activity sectors over four decades of practice inspired by the four theoretical dimensions reviewed previously, so much so that the Québec of today illustrates a territorial planning system with multiple facets which intersect, influence, compete with, or complete each other, and all this according to relatively complex methods. The provincial intra-national territories are currently the object of a general public planning procedure split into many distinct operations described as “mixed scanning” (Etzioni 1968). Furthermore, if one considers the corporate action plans of private companies and civil society groups as well as those of publicly-owned establishments in health, education, public safety, etc., of all levels of government, this profusion of planners certainly makes it possible to know territories in detail. It also makes it possible to add rationality to the maximum number of areas within territorial communities.

Global Vision

In reference to the theoretical procedure of rational comprehensive planning, let us stress that in Québec, systematic reflection on values, collective realities and goals is almost absent in territorial planning exercises except in certain cases, as it was with the BEAQ procedure. A more substantial thinking process was also present, to some degree, during certain exercises at the university level in the form of forums, conferences, panels or seminars. Certain values such as development sustainability, industrial operation effectiveness, participative democracy or intergenerational justice are imposed on the territories through societal standards diffused by various institutions, but not necessarily by planning as such which adopts more than it initiates in this respect.

For the purpose of a territorial vision that does not really take collective realities into account, let us note that pragmatism largely invaded territorial planning in Québec by providing it with increasingly exhaustive and precise ‘diagnoses.’ Detailed studies and imposing works were carried out particularly within the framework of planning missions (1969-1972) and regional initiatives (1974-1976). At the time of these two important exercises, forecasts presented optimistic, pessimistic and realistic scenarios in order to offer future options to the decision makers. Thereafter, the diagnoses were refined constantly, though unevenly, between the territories. For this purpose, several MRC planning projects and some other specific plans gave the opportunity to scan more deeply the various demographic, social, cultural and economic elements of the territories in question (Proulx 1987).

In this same frame of mind, the first generation of regional socioeconomic conferences which took place during the 1980s also generated important basic studies of the territories under planning.

More recently, with the implementation of the aforementioned strategic planning, experts have benefited from much more complete territorialized statistical data, including not only demographic, employment and income but also social and cultural data. The provincial government of Québec and certain national institutions carry out excellent work by providing, in particular, standardised comparable indicators and information on the territories under planning (MDEIE 2006). An indicator of regional production is available from now on, and it is leading the analysis towards new prospects. In this frame of mind, certain territories are now using a process chart or at least a detailed multi-variable and constantly updated diagnosis tool. Also, the various territorial activity sector scans of their own situations are continuously improving.

In spite of these remarkable efforts in connection with the diagnoses, certain components which are impossible to circumvent with a global territorial perspective still escape the analyst, because the sets of data over long periods remain too rare to offer reliable coefficients, tendencies and trajectories in connection with the various components which would allow the pertinent clarification of the territories' planning, management and development. In fact, territorial reflexivity proves to be extremely limited, as experts do not have the necessary analyses to seize and adequately locate the present moment in the evolutionary movement of their territory. Consequently, the territories lack perspective on their own evolution, which confines them to re-activity rather than pro-activity *vis-a-vis* emergent stakes. Without the essential distance, projections towards the future remain extremely difficult to carry out. In fact, the territorial visions currently available in Québec represent excellent, though still imperfect, photographs of the situation. But the movie to be viewed is not quite ready, in particular sequences within the moving institutional conditions supporting cohesion, synergy and other virtuous effects generated by the proximity between the actors. However, these effects, known as 'economies of proximity,' are at the heart of contemporary questioning of development theory, in relation to the technological poles, communities of interests, specialized economic zones and local communities.

Let us mention here that the group Vision Saguenay 2025 carried out an exercise of territorial futurology in recent years (Proulx 2007a), using long cycles theory. The results are certainly limited to only one administrative area but all the same, they illustrate a direction for territorial planning so that the many planners in the field could become more visionary.

Strategic Framework

As the intermediate phase between the finalities (goals) and the actions (projects), the strategic framework theoretically offers five major distinct options to lay out the available methods: concentration, dispersion, saving, increasing and reduction. The formulation of strategies using available resources through concrete actions in order to reach goals and community purposes distilled in targeted objectives existed in the territories of Québec well before the implementation of the aforementioned formal strategic planning in 1992 (Proulx 2003). From the creation of the Ministry of Agriculture in 1888, Curé Labelle had his strategies regarding the colonization of the Laurentides region. It was the same with the Vautrin plan implemented in the 1930s, particularly in the area of Abitibi-Témiscamingue. Several cities and municipalities traditionally counted on specific strategies regarding trade, industry, tourism, holidaying, mines, forests, etc. During the 1960s, the BAEQ work took the shape of a genuine strategic framework with several well identified orientations, whereas the plan drawn from the Inquiry—Participation in the Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean exercise led in 1966 to three distinct strategies to develop the means available for this area, that is to say blueberries, sawmills and full employment (Bélanger 1966).

In this last peripheral area, the planning mission carried out at the beginning of the 1970s generated an important framework illustrating about fifteen strategies. It was the same in several regions which, with the arrival of regional delegations from the *Office de planification et de développement du Québec* (OPDQ, the Québec Planning and Development Office), marked the occasion by establishing a mission connected to the production of a regional strategic framework. Of these multiple regional strategies offered to the local and regional actors present at that time, the main regional strategy forwarded to Québec City related precisely to the installation of new, typically regional, organizations, whether sector-based Councils or ministerial Directorates (Bouchard 1979). Started in the 1970s and continued during the 1980s, the institutional development that was carried out as a consequence of this strategy became the main product of the regional policy (Brochu and Proulx 1995).

The territorial framing of actions according to available means was further reinforced in 1974 with the implementation of the procedure leading to the regional schemes of work (OPDQ 1976). The goal of this planning exercise was clearly laid out from the angle of an allowance of public resources better directed towards well identified objectives. Transposed on a national scale, the regional orientations of this exercise were synthesized in five major strategies to guide the installation, management and development of the areas, which are: 1) the rise of the exploitation level of natural resources; 2) the diversification of regional economies through transformation; 3) a greater participation of the citizens in

the development efforts; 4) the consolidation of the rural sectors; and 5) a better balance in urban development.

Thereafter, the strategic framework was used to define the territorial plan, in particular diagrams on the MRC scale, as of 1982, with the major difference that on this scale, the MRC land use projects have a legal status which offers regulatory powers in addition to the incentives and indications largely inspired by Québec.

At the time of the two generations of regional planning in the form of socio-economic conferences (SEC) in the 1980s, the strategic framework was certainly present but less dominant within the planning procedures which were mainly concerned with the implication of decision makers in the sphere of concrete activities. This was thanks to a process of mobilization and engagement supplied by a series of small events coordinated towards the realization of a Summit. Put in moratorium in 1991, the aforementioned regional Summits were replaced by more formal interfaces, more and more strongly marked out by formal agreements between Québec and the regions. These agreements were associated with a strategic planning process which recommended a sophisticated methodology to work out more detailed territorial portraits in order to set objectives to operationalise the programs of higher government levels.

This strong return of the strategic framework, which intensifies with the approach for 'sectoral excellence' in Québec's territorial planning, does not hide the inherent difficulties with the *ex ante* evaluation of the many strategic options offered *a priori* by numerous actors. Thus, the selection of the most relevant strategies according to rational criteria becomes problematic. This technical deficiency of the *ex ante* measurement of the impacts strongly impedes the priority of some true regional strategies in territorial contexts characterized by the multiplication of various interests defended by corporate strategies. Consequently, the coherence, convergence and cohesion of a total strategy prove increasingly difficult to reach in the territories, therefore limiting the potential for the production of 'economies of proximity.' Let us also mention that this strategic dimension of the planning exerted in Québec integrated only very little the evaluation *ex post*, thus often confining the strategists in a disjointed process style of 'forward-backward-on hold.'

Interaction Dynamics

Between the mechanisms of the market and the hierarchical organisational structures of public administration on territories is the political community which includes councils and commissions as well as committees, associations, trade unions, co-operatives and chambers of commerce. These community decision-making authorities represent the traditional forms of interaction between the actors in a spirit of collective empowerment of public responsibilities. In 1946, the Saguenay-

Lac-Saint-Jean region set up its first version of a *Conseil régional de développement* (CRD, the Regional Council of Development). In 1969, this experiment was extended to the majority of the administrative areas thanks to the support of public policy. During the 1970s, sectoral regional Councils multiplied (Bouchard 1979), a movement of institutionalization of territorial interaction (dialogue) that continued through the 1980s (Jean and Proulx 2001). This decade also saw the arrival of the Councils of the mayors, committees and commissions on the MRC supra-local scale before the set up of the *sociétés d'aide au développement des collectivités* (SADC, organisations for supporting community development), the *sociétés locales pour l'investissement et le développement économique* (SOLIDE, local organisations for economic investment and development), the *centres locaux de développement* (CLD, local development centers), the *centres locaux pour l'emploi* (CLE, local employment centers) and other organizations on this scale. All these formal mechanisms of interaction contribute through their expertise, knowledge and methodologies, to various planning processes on these territorial scales.

During the 1980s, a regional planning procedure of an interactive nature was implemented in Québec. Indeed, two generations of CSE (socio-economic conferences) delivered very interesting results which greatly impacted the culture of territorial development. The Dialogue Tables which were created at that time grew in numbers and became, with the sectoral regional Councils, the framework of regional participative democracy which certainly allowed the expression of the needs, tastes and preferences of the local and regional elites in a spirit of adaptation of the public programs to the various territorial conditions. From the point of view of the State, this regional dialogue, institutionalized and largely dependent on its public resources, allows territorial regulation without too much political turbulence *vis-a-vis* regional choices and priorities. Thus, the regionalism which strongly emerged only a few decades ago was contained and controlled in its role of consultation. It currently fits in a context of general balance by which the defence of a multitude of small corporate interests, through competition to obtain the relatively rare public resources, becomes its major *raison d'être*.

In spite of the important degree of sedimentation of participatory democracy, which became a method of territorial regulation in a governance sense in Québec (Proulx 2004), there are several felicitous initiatives on the side of abstract interaction. They take four distinct forms and are inter-connected. First, there are the new regroupings in the traditional style of a regenerating civil society. If it is difficult to comparatively measure this renewal rate, we have noted that it makes it particularly possible to press for the renewal of the more formal mechanisms of interaction such as the official territorial Councils. We have also noted the multiplication of networking activities which are halfway between the formal and the informal, in particular around new causes, new interests, and new fields of cultural, social and economic development. This networking is effected considerably

by a third form of informal interaction, that is to say the small events. We counted 312 of these in 2005 and 418 in 2006 in the region of Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean (Proulx 2007a), from the simple artistic launch to the formally organized conference, as well as exhibitions, committees or brainstorming meetings. Finally, the informal interaction on a territorial scale structures itself around ideas, projects and actions via catalysts or mediators.

Operational Decision-Making

Whether under the angle of the physical installation of equipment and infrastructure, the public servicing of collective goods and services, or the implementation of measurements regarding social, economic, environmental and cultural development, territorial planning challenges the concrete actions supported by decision makers, promoters, contractors and managers. It is these territorial actions which, depending on the methods available, make it possible to achieve the identified objectives, in regards to the collective realities, goals and values of the community under planning. The presence of well planned actions (and of their costs and impacts) not only makes it possible to validate the strategies but also to check the realistic character of the set goals and recommended purposes. Integrating decision-making with action within the process of territorial planning is therefore relevant, and would notably require the assembly of multi-criteria feasibility, including the formal engagement of the promoters, decision makers and partners.

Such was the case with the decisions of Curé Labelle (railroad, churches, roads, subsidies...) in order to colonize the Laurentides in the 19th century. It was the same with the government's decision to implement the Vautrin plan in the 1930s. We also find this case with cities making operational decisions in connection with equipment, infrastructure and services depending on the town-planning models elaborated according to targeted values, purposes and objectives. In fact, the promoter of the action often proves to be the planner. When the strategist is also the operator in the territorial planning process, the latter's pragmatism generally demands the realism of the former.

However, this relation is not obvious since the real decision makers often remain external to the territorial planning process, in particular the politicians as well as the private promoters. Too often, the result is the concrete realization of projects of an idealistic nature which thereafter become errors or marginalities in planning models. In such cases, the context of decision-making places the objectives face to face with the operational feasibility of necessary and desirable actions. In fact, the desired balance between idealism and realism is carried out within the decision-making process. Hence the relevance, according to the theory, that this process take place within the territorial planning procedure.

To this end, in Québec, the BAEQ plan (BAEQ 1966) is well known for the utopian character of some projects recommended from the inference of ambitious objectives which required daring, even radical actions, in order to modify the socio-economic situation deplored by the territorial diagnosis. At that time of great hopes, the planning processes initiated in 1961 in the Basse-Pérignon valley generated in 1966 a plan for the whole Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean region, which proposed several original but not easily operational actions since they were insufficiently elaborated in their feasibility (Gouvernement du Québec 1969). The 'mission' and 'diagrams' regional planning operations also sought suitable actions through which to apply their strategies and recommendations, but the planning strategists of the time relegated the mandate of the plan application via concrete actions to other authorities. This mandate was therefore given to municipalities, community groups, enterprises, and government agencies or committees, while the postponement of the application of the strategies was widely accepted. As for the first generation of MRC planning diagrams, the desirable actions were generally inventoried, though their feasibility and promotion were not included in the plan. Here also, actions resulting from the *milieu* via municipalities, committees, commissions, centers or development bureaus were requested. It is the same with the current regional strategic planning by which the assembly of concrete actions to implement the plan belongs to another extremely distinct process which challenges promoters to action. In reality, today as before, strategists leave it up to the *milieu* to apply their orientations and recommendations by illustrating the means available, in particular the current specific agreements between Québec and the regions.

In short, territorial planning as carried out in Québec separates the strategic sector from the action sector, in two distinct operations. On one side, there are strategists that deliver counsel and recommendations and on the other, the promoters of action that occupy themselves with the feasibility of their project. This separation of the roles in planning is rendered official by the currently recommended procedures which attempt to effect an honest connection between idealism and realism, or the objectives and the results, via two inter-connected mechanisms, that is to say dialogue (indication) and specific agreements (incentives). In the case of MRC territories, let us note that there are also coercive means associated with the regulatory capacity which the Council of the mayors can exert to bind land use planning and development.

The known negative effects of the separation of these two sectors in territorial planning are completely confirmed in Québec (Proulx 2003), whether: neglect of stated objectives turning attention to available methods; improvement of prior actions rather than research for new actions; predominance of a disjointed incrementalist planning, which preserves assets; or, limits and constraints applied to strategic actions carrying significant changes according to objectives laid down to modify reality in a desired direction.

An exception to the rubric of separation between strategists and actors took place at the time of the two generations of regional socio-economic conferences (SEC) during the 1980s. Anchored in the principle of participation in territorial decision-making processes, this planning procedure largely mobilized the territorial political community, the civil community, public agencies and to a certain extent the private sector (Cartier and Rousès 1987). At the time of local collective gatherings preceding the planning approach, hundreds of embryonic action projects were proposed that were perhaps not all very constructive for the economy, but that offered nevertheless numerous options (Proulx 1996). Thereafter, the organisation of projects' feasibility was stimulated by sectoral meetings that mainly aimed at confronting the options between them in order to eliminate, improve, regroup and select. During a Forum organized after the collective gatherings, the major decision makers of the area analyzed the projects, as a planning exercise, using a grid of rational criteria in order to determine regional priorities. Partnerships towards the implementation of the projects were then proposed. A territorial Summit was held and concrete actions towards a formal commitment of the decision makers, including the Ministers for the government of Québec, were finally proposed, after the projects were subjected to governmental program standards. Follow-up actions were then carried out by the promoters and the Development Council of each region.

Territorial Planning Gaps

In spite of its obvious contribution concerning rationalization of the allowance of public resources, our historical analysis of current territorial planning in Québec, well positioned in the analysis model (Proulx In press), leads us to believe that the process is not optimal for the maximization of innovation and for the support of levers and additional factors empowering development. There are in fact several gaps that limit the effects expected in theory by such planning practices that 'connect knowledge and action' in the territories.

First, the general fragmentation of territorial planning into multiple parts by territories and sectors splits up the vision, the strategic framework and also the actions which, essentially, should aim at a global integration (Friedmann and Weaver 1979). This fragmentation is again accentuated with the current targeting of 'excellence in strategic sectors' and the reinforcement of certain sectors such as health, education or agriculture. Thus, territorial comprehensiveness, formerly the virtue of regional planning, proves largely crumbled, in spite of certain gains on the MRC scale where the plans made often integrate the consideration of several sectors including the conditions for supporting development. To be accepted in the regions, the selected strategic frameworks must inevitably be inclusive, generous, flexible and not very restrictive of the number of strategies, which causes the loss of capacity for real direction of action. For this purpose, let us stress that planning on a regional scale does not have any coercive capacity and few incen-

tives. It offers only a simple indication of the paths to be taken by the developers of programs in the Québec government and the operators in the field. Moreover, the ascendance of these territorial indications generally suffers from the absence of a true regional community project which could grant it a legitimacy or at least, credibility. One can therefore understand the limits of planning in generating 'economies of proximity.'

Another gap of the current 'allocative' territorial planning lies in the difficulty of mobilizing and involving the private sector, several active elements of the community sector and also new actors representing the aforementioned changing of the guard. In fact, several actors are forgotten by territorial planning in spite of the strong inclusion of consultation. Institutional mechanisms to involve the actors are already established and their seats are quite full according to controlled rules of representation, which certainly have their *raison d'être* but nonetheless insufficiently support a renewal of participants in a spirit of creative interaction. In an overview of this vast system of territorial governance, one largely finds there a *modus vivendi* of the defence of individual interests and of corporate approaches based on old, even outdated, actions. The call for new promoters and new projects proves clearly constrained by the actors' limited mobility and the generalized conservatism around assets. Furthermore, territorial planning authorities are not well equipped to support the organisation of the feasibility of new action projects, except for some vague impulses of certain strong minded agents. Thus, disjointed incrementalist planning asserts itself and dominates in the vast exercise of territorial planning.

On the other hand, let us underline that the use of a new territorial scale in planning generally offers bases and conditions for new actions. This was observed in the first regional planning exercises which allowed the development and claim of projects such as inter-municipal infrastructure for transportation, more impressive collective equipment, as well as public services which correspond more to the needs of regional customers than local ones. Socio-economic conference exercises positively contributed to a particularly prolific and effervescent context in this respect, by mobilizing hundreds of ideas and embryos of action projects, certainly not all very constructive but offering nevertheless many options to be prioritised according to costs and benefits. Following this, the introduction of MRC land use planning also allowed the inventory and description of territorial projects on this supra-local scale. Here also the feasibility of actions was assembled in independent, but related, processes called the town plan or quite simply the action plan. There is no doubt that planning is in need of a base, even ideal bases, for the emergence and realization of innovative territorial projects.

Finally, for this purpose, planning as it is currently present in the various intra-national territories of Québec does not have, or has very few, systematic

approaches to new strategic issues. The fields of intervention are well cut out and distributed among the various organizations which are, in addition, competing to obtain the available public resources. The territorial search for excellence in strategic sectors has reinforced these divisions and the new territorial development fields are thus perceived at best as impertinent and at worst, as already marginally included in another field. In any case, they always appear to be competing in a context of rare public resources, all the more so since these new territorial stakes often mould themselves to an inter- or intra-territorial base, obliging the actors to painfully question their mission's boundaries. Thus, the conditions for territorial pro-activity are placed *vis-a-vis* its capacity of adaptation within a quickly moving continental and global environment.

In short, strongly anchored in the connection of its purpose with the rational allowance of public resources, current territorial planning in Québec largely places itself in the existing institutional order, forgetting too much that the core of development resides in transformation, adaptation and renewal. Too far from an innovative balance, and fleeing the disorder which is essential to a certain degree, territorial planners are currently too badly equipped in vision and interaction to play their part properly, while public resources allocated for this purpose are considerable.

Conclusion

Four decades after the enthusiasm of the first systematic territorial planning exercise in Québec, it would be, in our opinion, relevant to evaluate the performance of this continuous practice, compared to the great territorial stakes raised at the time, such as the migratory erosion of the population, social justice, coherence, administrative effectiveness, appropriation of levers and responsibilities and democracy. We would thus be able to judiciously balance the various results reached in comparison to the efforts authorized by the governments. This completely relevant exercise remains to be done in Québec. Our analysis delivered in this text is registered as a marker in this direction. In the current state of the various territories which form Québec, a new territorial planning exercise appears completely desirable to us *a priori*, by specifically aiming at collective realities and goals with regard to innovation and adaptation.

If Québec wishes to innovate further in its various intra-national territories, it will have to consider the implementation of a more visionary and interactive planning procedure than the one currently dominating with its 'strategic framework' and its 'incrementalism.' To carry out the first quality, a global vision of the whole of the territories of Québec initially proves essential in order to seize the logics, forces and tendencies of space that structure the old and new territorial forms (Polese and Shearmur 2002; Proulx 2006, 2007b) while offering collective

directions and goals to the planners in the field. New territorial targets, often out of the boundaries of current divisions, will then be inevitably identified for planning. These new targets will theoretically generate new actions. As for the quality connected to the interaction, the governmental authorities will have to challenge, from the base to the top, those actors engaged more or less radically in projects of social, cultural, political and economic transformation, particularly in the community and private sectors. Beyond the current provisions for formal consultation, the procedure will have for this purpose to mobilize within the informal interaction, essentially nebulous and creative, while being condensed around establishing the feasibility of action projects.

The territorial capacity of innovation as well as appropriation of public responsibilities and development levers via the intervention of territorial planning depend, according to our analysis, on a new procedure with a better balance between the four theoretical dimensions. Such a procedure was tested in the Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean region by the Movement Vision 2025 (Proulx 2007a). Although capable of improvement, the territorial futurology exercise carried out by the community nevertheless generated very interesting results in the shape of diagnoses, various optional scenarios to get away from 'incrementalism,' as well as large components of a community 2025 project. In addition, lessons were drawn under the procedural angle.

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