Induced versus Autonomous Behaviour in Regional Development – A Process Model for Regional Strategy Formation

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Abstract
Debates on strategic planning reflect the old controversy between rationalists and incrementalists about the benefits of comprehensive plans in uncertain environments. From a rationalistic point of view planning focuses on inducing stakeholders to act in accordance with the ‘plan’. However, in complex societal systems such as regions the potential to control the environment is rather limited. Hence it is in addition crucial to influence the autonomous behaviour of innumerable stakeholders. This includes all activities and interactions that are not directly caused or motivated by a plan, but that are nonetheless relevant for the realisation of the fundamental objectives of a region. Here, communicative planning approaches targeted towards mutual learning and the development of a common frame of reference seem to be more adequate.

In this paper a new process model for regional strategy formation is designed. It encompasses not only intended but also realised strategies. Both, the perspective of the rationalists, that see strategy development as an intended course of action, and the perspective of the incrementalists, in which the realised course of action determines strategy development, are considered. Therewith the process model combines the two basic understandings of ‘strategy’: the formulated strategy as a product of intentional planning (strategy as plan) and the realised strategy as a product of both induced and emergent strategy formation (strategy as pattern).

1. Introduction
In the 1980ies and 1990ies the widely accepted ‘turn to projects’ in the practice of spatial planning in Europe led to incremental and fragmented approaches in urban and regional development policies. Only recently, spatial planning is rediscovered as a strategic process (Wiechmann 2006). The drawbacks of project-based planning provoked an increasing interest in strategic planning approaches and a debate on the revival of strategic spatial planning (Salet & Faludi 2000, Albrechts et al. 2003, Hutter 2006). The ‘turn to strategy’ (Healey 2007: 183) is a response to the shortcomings of incremental planning by projects. Unlike the traditional spatial planning, that was based on the simplifying assumption that when a strategy is articulated and approved, it will be easily
implemented, strategic spatial planning acknowledges that formulating and implementing strategy is one of the most challenging tasks of urban and regional governance.

In the following selected results of a two-year research project that dealt with the paradoxical practice of strategising in regional development initiatives in Germany are presented. It was based on the assumption that well performed strategies lead to more effective planning practices and that planners need to improve their strategic abilities to act as analysts, advisors, facilitators, and managers. This paper introduces a new process model for regional strategy formation. Traditional planning models usually focus only on induced behaviour of regional stakeholders. As in complex societal systems such as regions the potential to control the environment is rather limited the here presented process model also considers autonomous behaviour of innumerable stakeholders. This includes all activities and interactions that are not directly caused or motivated by a plan, but that are nonetheless relevant for the realisation of the fundamental objectives of a region.

To provide a theoretical basis for the process model chapter 2 briefly describes the concept of strategic planning in different academic fields. In chapter 3 the diversity of theoretical approaches is reduced to the simplified dichotomy of two conflicting strategy models. Reasons are given why in complex systems the framing capacity of planning is limited even under planning friendly conditions. The process model for regional strategy formation is presented in chapter 4. The paper concludes in chapter 5 with some reflections on potentials and limits of the practical application of the model.

2. Context matters: the ambiguous nature of strategy

‘Strategy’ is a fuzzy term. Depending on the context ‘strategy’ can have several different meanings. In general, strategies organise thinking about certain issues by providing simplifying concepts and points of reference which actors can call upon (Healey 2006: 244). In organisations strategies are expected to reduce complexity and to promote consistent behaviour. A major role of strategy is to resolve the big issues so that people can get on with the details (Mintzberg et al. 1998: 17). Subject to the degree of abstraction strategies might become manifest in visions or mission statements, as well as in programs, plans, concrete projects or in symbolic actions.

Strategy research offers hundreds of reasonable definitions of strategy that are with regard to the theoretical propositions inconsistent with each other. Despite the big variance two groups of definitions can be differentiated: for some strategy is a pathbreaking plan, consequently a matter of intention, for others it is an identifiable decision pattern that has emerged over time and thus a matter of interpretation. Examples representing the first group of definitions are the following ones from Stanford Professor Kathleen Eisenhardt, a leading scholar in management theory, and John M. Bryson, a US-American planning scientist.

\textit{Strategy answers two basic questions: 'Where do you want to go?' and 'How do you want to get there?' } (Eisenhardt 2003: 149)

\textit{Strategic Planning may be defined as a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization (or other entity) is, what it does, and why it does it.} (Bryson 2004a: xii)

The best-known representative of the second group is presumably the Canadian economist Henry Mintzberg. In his influential book ‘The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning’ (Mintzberg 1994) he criticises the traditional, planning friendly understanding of strategy and describes strategies as realised patterns in a stream of decisions. Other scholars share this view on strategies as emergent phenomena that cannot be controlled by a top down decision process.

\textit{Strategy is the pattern that emerges over time from the decisions and actions taken by the members of an organization.} (Chakravarthy & White 2002: 192)

\textit{Strategic behaviour therefore tends to become entrenched in the ‘routines’ and ‘standard operating procedures’ imposed by political exigency and cognitive limits. Rather than perfectly rational strategies, organizations opt simply for ‘adaptive rationality’.} (Whittington 2001: 22)

As will be shown later there are fundamental differences between the two groups of definitions. They are based on incommensurable paradigms. However, Mintzberg and others emphasise the value of theoretical diversity and varying definitions. Hence, the academic debate in strategy research is characterised by consent on dissent: there is a mutual consent that there is neither in practice nor in research a consensus on what is meant by the term ‘strategy’ (Chaffee 1985: 89). „The strongly conflicting views mean that strategy cannot be summarised into
broadly agreed on definitions, rules, matrices, and flow diagrams that one must simply absorb and learn to use” (De Wit & Meyer 2004: 3). To accept the theory pluralism means inevitably to abandon all attempts to define strategy accurately. Strategies are ambiguous. In different contexts they imply different things. Strategic planning is “not one thing, but a set of concepts, procedures, and tools that may be used selectively for different purposes in different situations” (Bryson 2004b: 57).

Fig. 1: Strategising: Modes of Decision-Making (Wiechmann 2006: 5)

In modern societies planning is seen as a powerful and effective way to prepare strategic decisions and to rationalise governance processes. However, planning is not the only way to arrive at a decision or to develop a strategy. In many situations intuition, routines, ballots, bargaining and other modes of decision-making can substitute planning (see Fig. 1). Strategising without planning is possible and prevalent in the practice of urban and regional development across Europe. Hence it is crucial to distinguish strategising from plan-making. Whereas planning is traditionally about rational analysis and programming, strategising is targeted towards discovery and creative synthesis. To many scholars (e.g. Mintzberg 1994) strategic planning is even an oxymoron. In different academic fields (like management theory, organisation theory, and policy analysis) a rich body of literature exists concerning the challenge to combine planning and strategising. This is in particular true for business science where strategic management developed since the 1950ies from basics in military and administration sciences to a separate field of research. Here, planning is usually seen as a formalised procedure to produce articulated results. Since the 1980ies this mode of strategic decision-making was criticised for being a technocratic, inflexible, and structurally conservative ritual: “Planning is about programming, not discovering. Planning is for technocrats, not dreamers. Giving planners responsibility for creating strategy is like asking a bricklayer to create Michelangelo's Pieta.” (Hamel 1996: 70).

In spatial planning things are different. The prevailing opinion is that in urban and regional development planning has to be seen as a complex task where the role of planners cannot be limited to technical functions. Political functions have to be considered as well. Thus spatial planning embraces more than planning in the narrow sense of the word in management science. In spatial planning all too often the word ‘planning’ simply refers to the work planners do. Consequently theory and practice of spatial planning usually assume that strategising and planning are synonyms. The problem is that with this terminology misunderstandings are likely, because planning in this broad sense can have very different meanings and would include all kinds of decision-making.

Since the 1980ies in particular American scholars from administration science and planning science dealt with the application of strategic planning approaches from management science to the public sector. In Europe the ongoing debate on strategic planning for cities and regions occurred later during the 1990ies and its focus is not on formalised business tools but on complex governance processes that moved beyond the limits of traditional spatial planning with its emphasis on land-use regulations and development projects (Albrechts 2004, Healey 2006). European proponents of a more strategic type of planning for cities and regions attempt to broaden the field of spatial planning and to include new dimensions in the sphere of planning (Sartorio 2005: 28). In this respect the reflection on the strategic nature of spatial planning in recent years indicates a wider openness of the planning discipline. In many cases this goes along with efforts to enhance democratic participation in planning.
processes and to create new arenas and rules of engagement. Recent strategic plans in several European countries aim at a close linkage between vision and action to adjust places to the changing socio-economic dynamics and to respond to issues proactively, rather than reactively. More important than the plan itself is what involved actors learn when they engage in a strategic planning process: “Plans as such are easily forgotten, or used merely as reference documents on some issues. What is remembered is what people learned - new perceptions, insights, facts, images - as they engaged in the policy articulation process” (Healey 2002: 21).

In contrast to the often overstated expectations deliberate and intentional planning in the narrow sense of the word has a relatively moderate role in complex governance processes. Planning may help decision makers to think and act strategically and it may generate new ideas and perceptions. But it does not predetermine governance decisions and it has to consider the multitude of decision modes. „It is helpful to think about decision makers as strategic planners and to think of strategic planners as facilitators of strategic decision making.” (Bryson 1998: 2166).

3. Two strategy models – Why plans are not enough

Much of the theoretical and methodological foundations of strategising and strategic planning originated in the last thirty years from international (i.e. English language) management and organisation theory. In principle management theory draws a distinction between two diametrically opposed strategy models: the linear model and the adaptive model. They differ from each other rigorously with regard to the key question of strategic planning processes: To what extend does comprehensive planning make sense in dynamic environments? With this the role of formalised organisational planning in strategic decision-making processes is principally questioned. The different answers to this question by the advocates of the linear model, the ‘rationalists’, and the protagonists of the adaptive model, the ‘incrementalists’, stimulated in the 1960ies a productive, still continuing controversy. Table 1 outlines key elements of the two models.

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<td>Purpose</td>
<td>decision support, intentional guidance</td>
<td>decision heuristics, mobilisation</td>
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Table 1: Linear and adaptive strategy models in comparison (adapted from Wiechmann 2005)

3.1 The linear strategy model

In many cases the term ‘strategy’ is simply associated to a plan or a systematic intention. This corresponds to the most popular approach in strategy research, the linear model. This model is based on the idea that strategies are implemented by a deliberate and intentional planning process. The linear process consists of a formalised analysis, a thereon based strategy formulation, which is finally followed by an implementation phase. A number of basic premises underlie the linear model (Mintzberg et al. 1998: 28):

- Strategy formation should be a deliberate process of consciously acting people that has to be controlled.
- Strategies must build on a comprehensive analysis.
- Responsibility for strategy formulation must rest with the executive manager, who sits at the apex of the organisational pyramid and controls the strategy process.
- Strategies should be explicit and fully formulated.
- Finally, in a distinct phase after strategy formulation, the strategy is to be implemented.
For Whittington (2001: 15) these premises create the “image of the strategist as general in his tent, despatching orders to the front. The actual carrying-out of orders is relatively unproblematic, assured by military discipline and obedience.”. To cope with the complexity of the real world proponents of the linear approaches to strategy suggest constructing models that incorporate the most relevant factors. Based on the assumption of complete information gathering and processing the complexity shall be handled by purposive planning. Mostly, approaches of this kind rely on some kind of SWOT analysis. With regard to the strategy formulation the end is defined independently of the means, thus determining their search.

3.2 The adaptive strategy model

Adaptive approaches experienced widespread diffusion in the 1970ies, when the stable socio-economic model of the postwar period – the fordistic form of production - plunged into crisis and with it a type of planning that was neither able to predict the crisis nor to come up with promising strategies. The adaptive model of strategy starts from the empirical observation that linear planning approaches frequently fail (Wildavsky 1973). If a strategy is analysed not only with regard to the future objectives it aims at but also with regard to its actual outcomes one usually figures out that only a part of the realised strategies were consciously planned. “Few, if any, strategies are purely deliberate, just as few are purely emergent. One means no learning, the other means no control.” (Mintzberg et al. 1998: 11). Here, a new meaning is attributed to the term ‘strategy’: it stands for decision pattern, a consistent behaviour. The realised strategy is a combination of deliberate strategies (in Mintzberg’s terminology that is the realised part of the intended strategies) and emergent strategies (see Fig. 2). Emergent strategies develop when an organisation takes a series of actions that with time turn into a consistent pattern of behaviour that was not expressly intended in the strategic planning process. Mintzberg et al. (ib.: 227) argue that effective management essentially means to sustain learning while pursuing the strategies that work. Whereas deliberate strategies provide an organisation with a sense of purposeful direction, emergent strategies imply that the organisation is learning incrementally.

Fig. 2: Strategy as plan and strategy as pattern (adapted from Mintzberg et al. 1998: 12)

Like the linear model the adaptive model builds upon a number of basic premises:

- Monocausal cause-effect-thinking and means-ends-thinking does not cope with the interdependencies in complex systems.
- Conscious control of the complex actual environment is impossible.
- In the perpetual process of strategising formulation and implementation are not distinguishable.
- Strategising is not executed as a top-down process but through collective learning and adaptation.
- Prior task of the strategist is not to design deliberate strategies but to shape the process of strategic learning in a way that new strategies can occur.

The adaptive approaches to strategy reverse the linear means-ends-relation. Instead of searching for appropriate means to achieve defined ends, in a perpetual process of adaptation to the organisational environment only those ends are chosen that can presumably be achieved by the given means. Strategic behaviour focuses here on the
gradual adjustment of routines as a reaction to the dynamic environment. Articulated strategies might be reflected in action routines and in this way influence development paths.

3.3 Integrative perspectives on strategy

In their study „Strategy Formation in an Adhocracy“ Henry Mintzberg and Alexandra McHugh (1985) illustrated the two strategy models by striking metaphors from gardening. The analogy of tomato cultivation in a hothouse describes the paradigm of linear strategy formation. Strategies are formulated through a conscious controlled process, much as tomatoes are cultivated in a hothouse. As ripe tomatoes are picked and sent to the market, strategies are explicitly developed and then formally implemented. To manage this process means to preconceive insightful strategies, and then plant them carefully. The paradigm of adaptive strategy formation is represented by the ‘grassroots model’. It describes the idea that strategies are not planted and cultivated like tomatoes in a hothouse, they grow like weeds in a garden. These strategies can take root in all kinds of places. Sometimes weeds encompass a whole garden. The processes of proliferation may be conscious but need not be. To manage it means not to preconceive strategies but to recognise their emergence and to intervene when appropriate without cutting off the unexpected too quick (Mintzberg et al. 1998: 196). By juxtaposing these two extreme models against each other Mintzberg and McHugh want to make clear that both models are overstated and that real strategic behaviour falls somewhere in between. “All real strategic behaviour has to combine deliberate control with emergent learning” (ib.: 195).

Already more than twenty years ago Chaffee (1985: 96) stated that strategy theoreticians and researchers should begin putting the pieces together. Empirical evidence shows the coexistence of deliberate and emergent strategies, of formal and informal strategic planning processes. To Grant (2003: 515) the debate between the ‘strategy-as-rational-design’ and ‘strategy-as-emergent-process’ schools of thought has even been based upon a misconception of how strategic planning works in the real world. Today it is generally accepted that onedided views on strategy-making are ineffective with regard to the understanding of complex strategy development processes. “All too often … executives take a binary view: either they underestimate uncertainty to come up with the forecasts required by their companies' planning or capital-budging processes, or they overestimate it, abandon all analysis, and go with their gut instinct.” (Courtney et al. 1997). Promising strategies need to strike a balance between the two extremes.

With the combination of the two conflicting paradigms increasingly the strategy process as well as the strategy context comes into the field of vision of strategy researchers. Yet, the conditions for synoptic or incremental planning are not sufficiently clear. What is needed is an inclusive conception of strategy that incorporates not only collectively defined objectives and planned action but also gradual adjustment to emergent strategies, retrospective interpretation, and collective learning. Furthermore, contemporary approaches to strategy need to reflect the awareness that strategic planning is no panacea, no all-purpose blue print. Each time strategic planning has to fit into the specific decision-making process.

3.4 Why plans are not enough

A planning based approach seems to be in particular appropriate when the strategist’s knowledge of the issues at hand, the control of the environment, and the demand for reforms are estimated relatively high (Wiechmann 2007b: 67). Even if these planning friendly conditions are given, the generation and implementation of well thought-out plans is not sufficient to enable complex decision-making processes. Organisation theory offers two main arguments for this proposition.

First, formal planning is just but one reference system for institutional decisions that has to compete with others. Planning defines decision premises and edits arguments for certain decision options. However, the ultimate decision can always be made independent from planning. Secondly, the limited capacity of plans results from the fact that public planning is at the same time a technical process of information processing and a political process of consensus building (Fürst 2001). The notion of a linear progression of planning steps overlooks the political rationality of planning. In reality the linear process can be turned upside down. For instance, objectives often remain without impact, because they are formulated subsequently after a consensus on a detailed action plan. Sometimes certain patterns of events are only retrospectively reconstrued as an alleged rational decision.

Hence, in complex systems, like cities and regions, the framing capacity of planning is limited even under planning friendly conditions. From this it follows that urban and regional strategising cannot be reduced to the generation and implementation of spatial plans and programmes. This does not mean that formal planning processes are futile in strategy development. Certainly, planning can prepare the assignment of priorities. It may codify and legitimise reached agreements. Planning may as well contribute to the development of suitable
instruments and actions to implement a strategy. In any case the making of plans has to be embedded in a comprehensive strategy development process, where emergent strategies and informal operation rules are considered as well.

In view of the limited capacity of plans the well-known quote “planning is everything; plans are nothing” does not go far enough. Even though the process of planning is certainly of more importance than the explicit result in form of a plan, planning is not ‘everything’ but a well-grounded tool for strategy development. Its value depends on the given circumstances and it needs to be complemented by other tools. Sometimes even “planning without plans may not be such a bad idea” (Friedmann 2004: 54).

4. A process model for regional strategy formation

Debates on strategic planning reflect the old controversy between rationalists and incrementalists about the benefits of comprehensive plans in uncertain environments. From a rationalistic point of view planning focuses on inducing stakeholders to act in accordance with the ‘plan’. However, in complex societal systems such as regions the potential to control the environment is rather limited. Hence it is in addition crucial to influence the autonomous behaviour of innumerable stakeholders. This includes all activities and interactions that are not directly caused or motivated by a plan, but that are nonetheless relevant for the realization of the fundamental objectives of a region. Here, communicative planning approaches targeted towards mutual learning and the development of a common frame of reference seem to be more adequate.

In the following a new process model for regional strategy formation is designed. Partially it is derived from process models in political science and management science. Of particular influence was, among others, the pioneering work of John Kingdon (1984) on his multiple stream model, Paul Sabatier (1993) on the concept of advocacy coalitions, John M. Bryson (2004) on his strategy change cycle, and Robert Burgelman (1983) on an evolutionary framework of the strategy-making process in firms. Ideas from these approaches were picked up to design a new model for regional strategy formation.

![Process Model for Regional Strategy Formation](image_url)

Fig. 3: Process model for analysing regional strategy formation (Source: Wiechmann 2007b)

Fig. 3 contains the basic elements of the process model and their internal interactions. The left side of the figure represents the linear strategy model. The right side reflects the adaptive strategy model. Following Friedrich von Hayek’s (Hayek 1969) distinction between two types of orders one could assign the linear strategy model to the planned human made order of the ‘taxis’ and the adaptive strategy model to the spontaneous or emergent order
of the unplanned cosmos. Consequently the model encompasses not only intended but also realised strategies. Both, the perspective of the rationalists, who see strategy development as an intended course of action, and the perspective of the incrementalists, in which the realised course of action determines strategy development, are considered. Therewith the process model combines the two basic understandings of ‘strategy’: the formulated strategy as a product of intentional planning (strategy as plan) and the realised strategy as a product of both induced and emergent strategy formation (strategy as pattern).

**Elements of the process model**

**Strategic concept**

The model focuses on the process of strategy formation. Starting point is the *strategic concept*. By defining the fundamental objectives of a region it provides a more or less shared frame of reference for the strategic actors. The strategic concept contains the explicitly articulated intentions of a region. Mostly it consists of formal outputs of strategic planning processes in the form of plans, programmes, concepts, records, or stipulations on resource allocations. Normally it comprises more than one document.

The model does not determine how the strategic concept is generated. A priori the model for analysing regional strategy formation does not differentiate the process of strategy formulation as it can take very different courses. The regional approach of strategy formation is nevertheless an important aspect of the strategic concept.

**Induced strategic behaviour**

Induced *strategic behaviour* involves all intentional actions that are on the one hand relevant for the realization of the fundamental objectives of a region and on the other hand directly (or indirectly via the institutional context) triggered or motivated by the strategic concept.

Induced strategic behaviour usually tends to implement the objectives and measures contained in the strategic concept. Insofar inconsistent behaviour is triggered by the strategic concept induced behaviour can also be in opposition.

**Strategy implementation**

Strategy implementation is the outcome of actions induced by the strategic concept. According to the linear strategy model the success of strategic planning has to be valued with regard to the conformance with the plan. In this perspective the strategic concept is seen as a blueprint and immediate instruction. Strategy implementation is as successful as the actual achievements are in line with the targets.

**Institutional context**

Following the actor-centered institutionalism by Scharpf & Mayntz (1995) the institutional context describes the given set of norms, conventions and values that structures courses of action at a certain point in time. This social rule system does not only encompass formal legal rules but also social values and informal norms. It stimulates and restricts social behaviour by means of sanctioning and control. To a large extend the institutional context is determined by factors outside the model.

**Autonomous strategic behaviour**

Autonomous strategic behaviour involves all actions that are relevant for the realisation of the fundamental objectives of a region but neither directly nor indirectly triggered or motivated by the strategic concept. Thus autonomous behaviour does not bear direct reference to the strategic concept.

Different groups of actors (administrators, politicians, interest groups, investors, property owners, citizens) have their own agenda in the regional development and planning processes following their own preferences and perceptions. Autonomous strategic behaviour occurs independent from strategic planning, nonetheless it exerts powerful influence on the implementation of the articulated targets and measures. It may interfere, complement or substitute induced strategic behaviour and like the latter it is structured by the institutional context.
Strategic discourse

Within the process model for analysing regional strategy formation a strategic discourse is defined as a non-formalized social process of colloquial communication of a wide range of actors on contents and actions of a strategy. On a regional scale the strategic discourse offers a limited accessible informal arena for information exchange, mutual confidence building, and the handling of argumentative conflicts. In particular when it is consensus-oriented the strategic discourse enables the participating actors to develop a common understanding of regional issues and objectives. In addition the strategic discourse offers a guiding decision framework beyond the formal planning documents.

Strategy application

Strategy application is the outcome of autonomous actions that are influenced by a shared frame of reference. According to the adaptive strategy model the function of strategic concepts is to extend options and to identify a shared frame of reference. The success of strategic planning has to be valued with regard to its influence on the performance of subsequent decisions. In this respect it is decisive whether the strategic concept was adequately considered in decision-making processes that were relevant for the realisation of the fundamental objectives of a region. The success of the strategy application depends on the enhanced quality of the autonomous decisions, no matter whether they conform to the original plan or not. If a discrepancy is justified with reference to the strategic concept non-conformance should not be considered as plan failure.

Interactions in the process model

The degree to which these seven described elements can intentionally be influenced differs significantly. Strategic concept, induced strategic behaviour, and strategy implementation can deliberately be designed (dark boxes in Fig. 3) whereas strategic discourse, institutional context, autonomous strategic behaviour, and strategy application are predominantly subject to external factors outside the model (light boxes in Fig. 3). For this reason the potential to intentionally influence or control autonomous behaviour is rather limited.

In Fig. 3 the reciprocal interactions of the model elements are illustrated in form of arrows. Solid lines indicate strong influence, broken lines weak influence. The linear strategy model is represented by the arrows (1) to (3) in the left half of the figure. They correspond to linear planning logic with a rational sequence of functionally separated steps that build on each other. This process is highly influenced by the institutional context and comprises a formalised analysis, a thereon based conception (strategy formulation) and a subsequent implementation phase (strategy implementation) (see Fig. 4).

Fig. 4: Interactions according to the linear strategy model

Elements and arrows of the right half of Fig. 3 represent the adaptive strategy model. Principally it assumes that only a small part of the realised strategies was consciously planned. Strategies emerge when autonomous behaviour of regional actors forms over time consistent patterns. The role of intentional planning is relatively modest as it has no direct influence on the autonomous strategic behaviour. Indirectly planning can affect the application of a strategy by participating in the strategic discourse, e.g. by setting certain topics on the regional
agenda or by launching certain arguments. In the end autonomous decisions are the result of intentional problem solving too and the individual rationality of singular decisions reflect what actors have learned in the strategic discourse. However, the influence of deliberate planning is minor in this adaptive strategy model (see Fig. 5). In the opposite direction the influence is much stronger, i.e. the strategic discourse of a broad variety of stakeholders has a strong impact on the strategic concept.

Fig. 5: Interactions according to the adaptive strategy model

Altogether the potential of formal planning to influence or even control the strategy process is much lower in the adaptive strategy model, i.e. the right half of the figure. However, the apparently high degree of control and order in the left half of the figure according to the linear strategy model hides the fact that linear planning only affects induced behaviour. The high degree of control is limited to a usually small part of the complex regional environment.

The differentness of the two strategy models should not mislead to the false conclusion that an empirically observable strategic concept has to follow exclusively one strategy model. In the descriptive process model introduced here the strategic concept is the joint starting point for both approaches. Each strategic concept can be analysed and interpreted according to the linear as well as to the adaptive strategy model. The linear planning model and the model of incremental adaptation are two sides of the same coin. Strategy-making always involves keeping both processes in play simultaneously at all times, even though one process or the other may be more prominent at different times.

Fig. 6: Formulated strategy versus realised strategy
5. **Potentials and limits of the model**

The process model presented in this paper breakdown the important elements and their internal interactions for describing and analysing regional strategy formation. Like all models it is based on simplification and reduction of the real world complexity.

Despite its simple structure a major achievement of this new model is its capacity to incorporate the two conflicting paradigms of linear and adaptive strategy-making. It encompasses not only intended but also realised strategies. Both, the perspective of the rationalists, that see strategy development as an intended course of action, and the perspective of the incrementalists, in which the realised course of action determines strategy development, are considered. Therewith the process model combines the two basic understandings of ‘strategy’: the formulated strategy as a product of intentional planning (strategy as plan) and the realised strategy as a product of both induced and emergent strategy formation (strategy as pattern) (see Fig. 6).

Another strength of the presented process model is its potential to illustrate different options to influence different types of action in regional strategy development. Fig. 7 demonstrates this by four examples that reflect the broad spectrum of governance and planning approaches in regional development.

- **Legalistic intervention**: Planning as a basis for legalistic intervention corresponds to the traditional approach of spatial planning in many European countries with a system of legally binding plans (e.g. in Germany). Regional plans, land use plans, and building plans prescribe norms. These plans influence the autonomous behaviour of innumerable actors via the institutional context (planning laws, building permissions etc.). In turn these actors have institutionalised rights to participate in the process of plan formulation.

- **Communicative planning**: Communicative planning approaches focus on the strategic discourse. Planning aims at a consensus among the stakeholder through the power of the better argument in non-hierarchic negotiations. The strategic concept becomes a learning tool to enable regional actors to make responsible decisions. Planners act as facilitators, mediators, and moderators.

- **Planning through projects**: In spatial planning this approach is associated with incrementalistic approaches, in particular the ‘logical incrementalism’ by James Quinn, the ‘mixed scanning’ by Amitai Etzioni and in
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Germany with the ‘perspective incrementalism’ by Karl Ganser. A piecemeal, incremental course of action is realised. To a large extend concrete projects substitute abstract programmes. Planning is constricted to spatially, temporally, and contentual limited interventions.

- **Non-planning**: The process model allows also analysing regional development approaches that abandon all forms of intentional comprehensive planning, e.g. in the tradition of the ‘disjointed incrementalism’ by Charles Lindblom. Interventions are restricted to the determination of abstract rules (within the institutional context) and the communication of general values and objectives in the regional strategic discourse. Consequently the influence on the principally autonomous incrementalists is weak.

Unlike most models in planning theory the present model does not assume a plan-making subject. Instead special emphasis is placed on the strategic actions from a wide range of regional actors with individual intentions and decision alternatives. Hence the process model is especially suitable for the complex context of regional development. An important restriction was already mentioned: many factors remain outside the model. This is in particular true with regard to the institutional context and the autonomous strategic behaviour, but also for the strategic discourse. The model does not describe a closed system, but a conceptional framework showing fundamental relations between different observable variables. In addition to the simple description of the regional strategy formation it is possible to identify causal relations. However, the deduction of prognoses is not possible.

The process model for analysing regional strategy formation illustrates the ambiguous nature of spatial strategies. It reveals contrasting theoretical perspectives on strategic planning. In dealing with the contradictory requirements of the linear and the adaptive strategy model regions have to make a choice: either they consider both perspectives at the same time while accepting the contradictoriness of the underlying paradigms or they decouple the two perspectives. This could be done temporarily by alternating phases of rational planning and incremental adaptation or with regard to the institutional setting, i.e. to practise a regional division of work where different institutions adopt different strategic perspectives.

So far the model has been tested in four German regions (Wiechmann 2007b). Future research of the author will focus on the empirical application of the model in different European regions.

**Reference list**


Mintzberg, Henry (1994): The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning, Hemel Hempstead.


Salet, Willem; Faludi, Andreas (Ed.) (2000): The Revival of Strategic Spatial Planning, Amsterdam.


* The full results will be published by the author in German language as “Planung und Adaption - Strategieentwicklung in Regionen, Organisationen und Netzwerken” later in 2007 (cf. Wiechmann 2007). More projects outcomes are already published in Wiechmann 2007a.