Vision Making in Large Urban Settings: Unleashing Anticipation?

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Abstract

Our society will increasingly be an urban society, with large metropolitan regions as the centers of development. These metropolitan spaces are supposed to create the economic and technological dynamics to solve the problems of the very same urban society. They are extremely complex structures, overall, difficult to understand in all their dimensions and asking for new ways of management, strategy formation, and general politics: "if we cannot imagine, we cannot manage." Stakeholders, citizens, and planners alike will be faced with the challenge to develop appropriate ideas guiding the dynamics and complex settings and to keep development horizons open for not yet anticipated trajectories. Vision-making processes become very important in such a context, in the best case creating open political horizons, interested in becoming and the "midwifing of futures." A survey of 30 vision-making processes in Europe forms the empirical backcloth for a presentation and discussion of urban systems, vision-making documents, time horizons and instant futures, vision formulations, and the "perpetual pursuit of unknowable novelty."

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Introduction

"What has changed today is the complexity and scale of the mega-city region, and its multiple intersections with virtual spaces and flows of globalization. This complexity and scale not only has clouded our image of the city (even as it has reinforced its centrality), but also has clouded our very ability to construct an image of the city region. This of course has direct consequences for the ability to govern one. *If we cannot imagine, then we cannot manage.*" (Neuman and Hull 2009).

Aforementioned quote from Neuman and Hull (2009) is a starting point for the reflections provided in this chapter. The quote triggered the work on vision making, by focusing on the last element, in particular: if actors are incapable to develop an imagination, or as is suggested in this chapter a vision or an idea, they will not be able to manage the growing urban complexity. Multiple perspectives are evoked by the quote: Imagining cities is actually a standard activity in the field of planning or urban design (Hall 2002 (3); McCann 2013). However, the professional field seems to be incapable to transfer this skill to the new spatial formations. Further, since more than a decade now, the metropolis or metropolitan region occupies a central position in strategic thinking, the metropolis seems to be "the" object of our times: the globally acting research community discusses its existence (Robinson 2006; Sassen 2001; UN Habitat 2006), the function (Castells 2010; Taylor et al. 2010), or the way of operation (Hall and Pain 2006), and also its many variations (Neuman and Hull 2009), and the political or strategic dimensions (Glaeser 2012; MacLeod and Jones 2011). A recent contribution by Brenner and Schmid (2015) even speaks about "planetary urbanism," seeing it as a global condition of modern society, with large agglomerations as center piece.

Terminology is fuzzy and varies a lot; it seems that our existing set of categories, theories, or concepts is insufficient to grasp all phenomena (for a critique, see Gleeson 2012). The phenomena under discussion have probably much more of a transitional quality than anything else. Precise terminologies may also not be that necessary, if the metropolis is seen as political object and the discursive construction of policy is the guiding principle (Fischer 2003). The metropolis is then not simply a new existing territorial form but the result of the preferences and intentions of actors who create the metropolis in different variants. It is a blurred definitional array, allowing for agreement or accordance, frequently operating on the basis of a

perceived similarity (Fischer 2003) between actors. And the vision is the future-oriented script of and for the metropolis.

The latter point connects to the issue under discussion in this book: anticipation. In approaching that notion, the current chapter will provide a reading of the "urban" as having or not having an "anticipation property." The anticipation framework is actually quite helpful in the current debate about urban development, as it links back to the problem addressed at the outset: our capacity to imagine can become a powerful tool in our capacity to manage the complex entities, which we call metropolitan regions. Imagination, following from the Greek *ide-ein*, refers also to the verb seeing, which in Latin is *videre* and one root of *vision*. The element of the *ide-ein* was addressed by Jean Gottmann (1961), who spoke in the 1960s about the necessity to develop a "city of ideas." And this is the main property of anticipation, which is suggested to further improve in urban development contexts: vision making is essentially about developing ideas about the future and especially about creating opportunities.

The modern urban society is frequently paired with that idea of opportunities (see Glaeser 2011) but that requires also the element of a "Möglichkeitssinn" (Musil), translated as sense of possibility. This sense of possibility is the capacity to do exactly that, thinking in possibilities and seeing what is not yet there, instead of focusing on what is given (Welzer 2014, quoting Musil). This capacity can be translated, in some respect, to a call for utopianism (Lefebvre 2003 [1965]), which follows from discussions and claims on the right to the city (Harvey 2012; Lefebvre 1968). As will be demonstrated later, instead of closing down futures, which is the most frequent outcome of vision processes, the main challenge for the vision process is the "opening up of political horizons," in sync with the utopianism formulated by Lefebvre.

This chapter follows above points as very important, and stating this right to utopianism at the beginning provides already a conclusion: we tend to see exercises which try to formulate visions for future development frequently as consolidating and comforting, and in a negative sense as utopistic, in particular as being non-consequential. However, looking back into the writings of Lefebvre, it is about time to take these exercises serious; as will be shown, a lot of resources (human, time) go into the process.

In the first part, the current chapter will elaborate anticipation dimensions in urban settings. We discuss here one recent contribution to a wider discussion regarding what is the urban or, respectively, how this condition of our modern societies can best be interpreted. In the second part, we will then look into exercises which can be related to anticipation, or maybe to the more common parts of anticipation, the attempts to grasp future developments in strategic documents produced by various actors in metropolitan contexts. Based on a set of such documents, we can explore actual conditions under which actors try to develop visions for the future. Finally, the chapter will discuss the findings in light of the introductory points, extending our presentation of empirical findings in Ache (2017).

Anticipation and Urban Systems: Conceptual Elements

This book is guided by a definition of anticipation (Poli 2010), which can be used for the attempt to identify the anticipatory properties of what is called the "urban." Poli (2010) refers to Rosen (1985) who understands anticipation as the capacity exhibited by some systems to tune their behavior according to a model of the future evolution of the environment in which they are embedded.

> Generally speaking, the thesis is defended that 'An anticipatory system is a system containing a predictive model of itself and/or its environment, which allows it to change state at an instant in accord with the model's predictions pertaining to a later instant' [Rosen quote]. The main difference between forecasting and scenarios on the one hand, and anticipation on the other, is that the latter is a property of the system, intrinsic to its functioning, while the former are cognitive strategies that a system A develops in order to understand the future of some other system B (of which A may or may not be a component element). Poli (2010, p 770)

The main aspect of the aforementioned quote is obviously that anticipation needs to be considered a "property of the system" and as "intrinsic to its functioning." The question from a planner's point of view is therefore, does the urban system have, or have not, such a property. The answer can be developed stepwise, by answering first, what defines the system, then how are the models of behavior defined, and last, what is the likeliness of instant state change? This analysis will be guided by conceptual ideas stemming from Henri Lefebvre (1991). In his seminal analysis, urban space is constructed along three dimensions, the perceived, the lived, and the conceived aspects of space. The element of practice appears in all of the three categories, direct or indirect, and is essential especially for the lived and the conceived; for what is conceived, the physical urban world is also important, not least because it was built by practice, bringing in the inherited layer of materialized societal practices to which current practices have to respond. This model conception is implicit to the following sections, discussing the anticipation properties of the urban system.

It is generally acknowledged, that the urban system is characterized by a very high complexity, as was pointed out in the introduction. It can be identified as scales and layers of the spatial, made up of cities, regions, or metropolitan regions, and in more general terms as the physical fabric of the manmade build environment. This material side of the urban is also surprisingly static, given the thousands of years of city history, this system turned out to be quite resilient in most of its parts (Benevolo 2000 (8)); in other words, a capacity to adjust or accommodate change must be in there somehow, lest a capacity to anticipate. Without that physical fabric or 'hardware', no agency, either of individuals or societies at large, to be active and to lead our daily life's.

This latter point adds to the system the social construction of the urban and is as a dimension in focus of actual theory formation. Brenner and Schmid (2015) formulated recently the hypothesis of a planetary urbanism. Their overall claim is that the urban is an essential condition of our modern societies. It is planetary, in the sense

that the urban has indeed become a worldwide condition in which all aspects of social, economic, political, and environmental relations are enmeshed, across places, territories, and scales, cross-cutting any number of long-entrenched geographical divisions. They further explore seven dimensions of the urban, from which the following deserve particular attention in an attempt to identify anticipation: The urban needs to be understood as a process and not as a universal form, settlement type or bounded unit; in fact, the urban has a multidimensional fabric. And, most relevant for the context of the discussion here, "the urban is a collective project in which the potentials generated through urbanisation are appropriated and contested." The first aspect relates to the urban being "produced through collective action, negotiation, imagination, experimentation, and struggle." The latter reflecting again on the procedural dimensions as the "urban society is thus never an achieved condition, but offers an open horizon in relation to which concrete struggles over the urban are waged." Both dimensions, obviously, mediate between the two dimensions of Lefebvre's lived and conceived space.

With a view to anticipation, the first property of the urban are the two dimensions of structure and agency that allow the urban society collectively to develop the potential embedded in the process of urbanization. The multitude of built forms but also the variety of collectives appropriating the urban provides a capacity to anticipate. However, adding a hypothesis, it only does so fully, if that collective also pays attention to a *Möglichkeitssinn* (returning to the sense of possibilities by Musil), in relation to open horizons, struggles, or, in our words, agonistic processes. This sense of possibilities is present in the element of experimentation, which has been an important aspect of the urban, past and present. In particular, modernity has seen many urban experiments, which tried to produce concrete utopias as test fields (one example being building exhibitions, as discussed in this volume; see also Hall 2002 (3); Wakeman 2016), which can also fail but then provide learning lessons. At the moment, a very attractive field for "experimentation" that can be seen from the analysis of current practice in urban visioning relates to the smart city idea, a field to define future pathways for cities and regions especially build on technology and hardware. At planetary level, high hopes are being attached to the smart city element, not only promoted by scholars like Edward Glaeser (2011), who sees the city as our greatest invention, that makes us richer, smarter, greener, healthier, and happier, at least this is what the subtitle of his influential publication proposes. Also, the United Nations (2014a) sees cities as the lynch-pin for improving our growth pattern toward a more climate-friendly model.

The two earlier mentioned examples unfold for us the second aspect of anticipation: the existence of a model for the future development of the urban as such and its environment. Glaeser (2011) and also other authors, in particular on the side of smart cities thinking, present the model mostly as an innovative machine in economic and innovation terms, based on technology, and the framework is characterized as the dominating capitalist growth model. The United Nations (2014a) do not expressively challenge that growth model aspect, but they add to the model especially the element of environmental sustainability, calling for different decisions to be made at

times. The construction of both elements, the actual urban model and also the forecasted environment, is heavily dependent on the given set of actors negotiating the future in the urban context. As will be seen later, there is a surprising constant that the model mostly turns out to be an "instant" future variant with a known and tested composition of material dimensions. Regarding the property of a predictive model of itself, the system reproduces a picture of its own in a slightly more nuanced form, incremental and polished-up; a tone of self-resonance to which the voices of central actors tune in. Dissonance is rarely encountered and, subsequently, no real challenging "utopian" view can be seen, yet. The latter aspect might in fact be a result of another property of most of the processes, which the analyzed documents reveal: the set of actors consists mostly of experts and professionals from the field, individually but also as a group loaded with an informed view on actual conditions and coming challenges; communities of established practices conceive the spaces sketched out in visions.

On the other hand, the utopian can be traced in the context of the urban, in particular in the field of architecture. Experiments are being built, with designs anticipating today possible future states of the urban. They have an importance as a "display" in the urban context, providing possible interfaces for people and futures. The showcases are obviously always exclusive perceptions of a future urban setting, not least due to the fact that individual designers and architects gave birth to such a vision.

However, the future does not always need to be built. Returning to the socially constructed side of the urban, at the other end of the spectrum we find the undefined spaces within urban contexts. Pioneers of the future can use urban voids, empty or under-utilized locations of the actual historic situation. Play in and with the urban fabric as the ground to nurture unforeseen capacity and to also nurture the "perpetual pursuit of novelty" (Lefebvre) has also been a way to anticipate. The assessment of that novelty or unseen future follows obviously in the renegotiation of the urbanization process. Ultimately, in the best case, the urban provides both elements of the model side, predefined futures of experiments as well as open futures; materially defined or procedurally defined futures; "builds" as well as "voids." In any case, the idea of urban future laboratories is an element that connects the experimental dimension with the model building, and accepts this as an activity adjacent to the rather closed loop of cause-effect thinking or purely instrumental dimensions. In the sense of Lefebvre, the three elements of urban space, physical/conceived, lived, perceived, need to be full played out in pursuit of novelty.

The following analysis of vision documents tries to explore politico-administrative processes in urban contexts; Brenner and Schmid (2015) would say interplays of different collectives. In our approach, we pay particular attention to "classic" collectives, experts and politicians or administrators, which are negotiating about visions in vision-making processes. As said at the outset, having a vision includes, in principle, conceiving an idea or being able to see. Both aspects are very central elements to urban planning. How this is done in practice will be demonstrated in the next sections, with the analysis of vision-making documents in large urban regions in Europe.

Reykjavik

Amsterdam Utrecht
The Hague Arnhem
Rotterdam Nijmegen

Helsinki

Oslo

Stockholm Tallinn

Gothenburg Riga

Moscow

Edinburgh

Vilnius

Dublin Bradford Copenhagen
Manchester
Liverpool Bremen Minsk
Leicester Warsaw
London Berlin Poznan
Portsmouth Antwerp Leipzig Kiev
Brussels
Prague Bratislava Chisinau

Paris Zürich Vienna Budapest
Bern Ljubljana Bucharest
Zagreb
Milan Belgrade
Sarajevo Sofia Istanbul
Podgorica Skopje
Rome Tirana

Madrid Athens

Lisbon

● : City with vision document included in the analysis.
■ : Capital city, but no English vision document available or included.

Map 1 City sample of the analysis

Anticipating the Future in Vision Documents

The empirical work presented in this chapter (see also Ache 2017) looks into the governance of vision making. The object of study is vision formulations in strategic documents from various European metropolitan regions (see Map 1). The selection has been done on the basis of statistical definitions (OECD 2012) and existing data bases (mostly population data) on European cities and city regions. This requires further clarification, as there might be a question: cities or metropolitan regions? The

metropolitan region presents a functional perspective on spatial structures (Ministry of National Development 2011); according to relational concepts of space, the times of clearly delineated cities as the clear-cut entity to study are basically gone (Jessop 2016). Development trends, actual and forecasted, point to an increasing importance of larger urban agglomerations (UN 2014b). These will be the epitome of our modern society, with the strongest hypotheses claiming a Europolis in the center of Europe stretching from London to Milano, as was formulated by the late Hall and Pain (2006).

The notion of a metropolitan region provides an additional dimension in this discussion; compared to the city as the political and democratic center of modern societies, the metropolitan region might be the new "mother" and center of the postmodern society, be it digital, millennial, or otherwise named. This is combined with the proposal to see this unit as the most important political and decision-making platform, which also confronts us with an impasse, that is the spatial and functional structure takes this shape; however, we are still operating on the basis of an "old" system of representation, based on classic cities.

At current, more than 30 European cities and strategy documents are presented in the data base; in addition, about the same number of transatlantic cases has been collected. Those documents were analyzed using an institutional analysis framework (Ostrom 2005) and focusing, for the time being, on certain properties found in the documents. These are, among others, the general structure, including technical dimensions, the functional quality, including the question is the document legally binding, and will be discussed later on with a view to anticipation. With such an approach and collection, one particular hypothesis is scrutinized: if we can imagine, we can manage (Ache 2013). This hypothesis is not only the backcloth for a kind of empirical test, it also expresses a professional expectation, fed by discussions related to "creation of hope" (Friedmann 2002). As planners, we need to anticipate all the time future developments with classic methods, like forecasting population development, job demand, housing requirements, to name a few. The "visioning" element, as suggested here, is taking that a step further, taking it out of the realm of standard procedures. It can probably be seen more in the direction of anticipation, or should be seen in such a direction. In those processes, among others, we leave the expert arena and integrate also other actors or stakeholders, in the best case. In fact, the ideal situation would be to do "visioning" in the form of creative agonism (Pløger 2004), with wide time horizons and challenging ambitions. To that point, the chapter will return later again.

A second important condition for the research relates to language. Because of restricted language capacities, the search had to be done in three languages, English, German, and Dutch, which reduced the number of available documents. However, a number of larger cities and city regions in Europe share their vision in English translation. A translation into English "caters" for an international audience, enhancing the aspect of seeing and understanding the core city as a strategic object also in international context. Until 2016, about 33 documents (see map with overview; a global survey is in preparation) were collected. The cities represented by these documents vary in size and also structure. They are found in 17 EU member states.

Most of the documents collected for this empirical research take as a starting point a core city and, as we have checked in the respective documents, references to a wider metropolitan region are frequently missing. This constitutes already an observation, as it seems that strategy and vision making mostly develop a navel button perspective. A second observation can be stated as well, in the sense that other metropolitan spaces or core cities are implicitly present, and that strategy making continues searching for an advantage over those others, competing either from afar or close by.

Now, what is actually a vision document; or in other words, what is the material form of a vision? Our sample shows that documents are not always clearly identifiable as "vision documents." The collection includes various types of documents, like city development plans, framework strategies, strategic plans, and also smart city guidelines. In a more abstract sense and in order of frequency, we have as categories (standard) plans, strategies, visions, concepts, models, and guidelines. In all of the collected documents, however, a vision has been formulated; some speak about "*Leitbild*," ambitions, or core set of priorities. The documents vary in length and can be both, very long or short; altogether, 5800 pages come together to establish strategic and also visionary thinking across all European cases. The number of pages as such is less interesting, though, and what instead interests us is the spread of page numbers, from 14 (but only one case) to more than 200 pages (with 20 cases); plans tend to be lengthy. Vision documents, at least the ones that are explicitly labeled as such, can be found in midfield.

The research also reflected on another material layer relevant for vision making, characterized as the planning system working in the background of the processes analyzed in the research. These systems can be identified either using different "planning families," like a "comparative integrated approach" thereby looking into the specific style of planning, or the distribution according to "planning traditions," like "Germanic," now reflecting more on the legal and constitutional setup of the system (Knieling and Othengrafen 2009; Reimer et al. 2014; University of Valencia et al., 2006). This is led by the hypothesis that differences in the respective system also present different approaches toward vision-making processes. Within the context of the European Union, the issue of integrated approaches toward spatial planning is a decades long discussion. The European Union "territory" certainly requires an integrated and coordinated approach, but planning traditions and systems are still diverse. The authority to define systems rests with individual nation states as the sole owners of national territories – and with that of course the traditions and cultures coming with "nation states." EU policy attempts are critically observed and frequently defended. The research referred to in this section analyses such systems, in search for a better understanding and, probably, better coordination. (Reimer et al. (2014) provide a good overview.). The picture resulting from the document analysis presents a balanced distribution; some observations tell that documents from Germany (build in a Germanic tradition) seem to need fewer words to express ideas about planning, whereas the documents from the UK use most, on average. The most extensive document with almost 600 pages came from Antwerp, with again a different planning approach. But, to be clear, at this moment, this is more anecdotal

evidence. A further analysis of the documents requires a look into the structure, assessing, for instance, the use of maps and graphs, the use of annexes with extended statistical information, or the provision of stakeholder lists. At current, the figures give us only an indication regarding the earlier on mentioned hypothesis: visions, overall, seem to be embedded in large(r) amounts of words, indifferent to the respective system or tradition. Visions pay probably more a tribute to the complexity of metropolitan spaces as such, following rather a local culture and tradition? The latter aspect comes to the fore in various literatures emphasizing the importance of local policy context, either with a view to mayors and their important role (Barber 2014) or to the local policy making system (Berking and Löw 2008); all of this resonates with the earlier discussion on city states (Ohmae 1995) where the hypothesis of a position independent of nation states was formulated.

Whereas an exact and positive list of vision documents cannot be provided, a kind of negative demarcation can well be established, when looking into the status as a legally binding document; here, almost all documents do NOT exercise binding powers. Most of the documents can be qualified as "nonbinding" (see Table 1); a smaller set binds other public bodies in their action. Only the city of Vienna formulates in its city-planning framework a binding quality for the private sector; however, that is, "on paper," and the original language formulation is somewhat ambiguous. The binding power and subsequent action depend obviously on the existing planning system in which a vision-making exercise happens. Most documents define a connection with other planning legislation or with required implementation plans and programs. Despite the general absence of a binding quality, what surprises is to find that documents frequently formulate aims, objectives, and to a lesser extent, also targets for their vision; the definition of at times very comprehensive and specific sets of aims, objectives, and targets clearly has an implementation dimension, implying also the evaluation and assessment of outcomes, which is not easy to establish without a legally binding quality. Obviously, the implementation of a vision, as well as some of the arguments developed for it, depends on another step; implementation is done in various ways but then always connected to a document or step entailing a legally binding quality. At a later stage, it will be interesting to analyze that particular translation step; how is what has been "seen" as idea of the future, the vision, being translated into a set of instructions, instruments, programs to achieve that future. And further, can a strong idea of the future influence rather independent actors in a setting of distributed resources and responsibilities, as is the case with metropolitan regions?

Table 1 Binding quality of documents

		Private actors	
		Binding	Nonbinding
Public actors	Binding	2	1
	Nonbinding	0	28

Note: For two documents, the legal status is not clearly stated; hence, the numbers here count up to only 31, instead of 33

Table 2 Participation

Aspect	Count*
Citizens vs. experts	
Exclusively public	13
Exclusively expert	0
Both	19
Total public involvement	32
Total expert involvement	19
Formal vs. informal process	
Formal	7
Mainly formal	13
Both	9
Mainly informal	2
Informal	1

* Count: number of documents that fall into this category

A particular element of vision making relates to participation and the degree of formality in the processes of drafting vision documents. The label "formal" participation clearly leads over informal processes. Often, a combination of formal and informal processes, depending on the concrete step in the production of a vision document, can be seen. The actual kind of participants, whether they come from other public institutions or from private parties, is more difficult to establish. The documents show huge differences here, with, e.g., the British cases providing long lists of participants, including individual citizens, which is due to the fact that legal provisions require that information – and also contribute to the length of the documents. Other documents provide only indications of who was involved, when, and why. To explore this aspect further, the research looked specifically into public involvement. Public involvement is very often the case; the sample records exclusive public involvement about 13 times; a combination of public and experts in 19 cases; there was actually no case with an exclusive expert involvement (Table 2).

Regarding public involvement, participant numbers or reactions, either received or submitted, can also be identified. The best-documented cases can be found in the UK because of a special clause in the planning regulations. Looking at the case of Bradford, one finds the following figures: 1465 consultees; 651 letters and 1001 emails sent; 1791 written notifications; 5894 web page hits during consultation phase; 90 attendees at workshops; 477 attendees at "drop-in events"; 144 attendees to Planning Aid England consultation events; 1255 written representations received. The Bradford core strategy and development plan is nonbinding; however, the document will gradually replace the existing development plans and framework, which is why the consultation process took this level of involvement. One has also to relate the figures above with the overall time used for the process, which was 85 months altogether.

A second example from a different planning context and approach can be found with the city of Berlin. This process, which took 35 months and led to the "*Stadtentwicklungskonzept 2030*," shows the following figures regarding involvement: 2.500

inhabitants used the "*Stadtforum 2030*" discussion platform; 75,000 website visitors per month; 1000 opinions and suggestions in "*Stadtforum 2030*" events and online dialogues; 1.500 visitors to "*Stadtforum 2030*" meetings; 1000 online comments received. Despite the different setting, first land use development, second comprehensive strategic planning, and the slightly different function of both documents, nevertheless interesting similarities in the respective figures and approaches.

What one has to keep in mind regarding such figures is that they are found in the documents which present a process under the auspices of the responsible actor, in both cases the municipality; whether it were exactly 1001 emails is not guaranteed with that. One has also to recall that Bradford has a population of around 530,000 inhabitants, and Berlin accounts for about 3.5 million inhabitants.

Anticipating Instant Futures

A part of the document analysis looked into the periods required for the production of the documents in the sample. This dimension looks into the historic time actually used for the design of the vision document in relation to the time horizons defined for the vision. In addition to the publication dates, ranging from 2004 to 2015, information on processes or starting points for the vision-making process was collected. On average, actors and experts in the cities and regions have been working for slightly more than 3 years on the documents as such. The most extensive working period reaches up to 7 years. Compared with that, the effective run-time of the documents is between 6 and 37 years. The production of vision and strategy documents requires a lot of time; this is especially interesting to see when compared with the mostly absent binding quality, which, as one would assume, reduces all formal procedural requirements, including for instance an option to file complaints, and accelerates processes. The research has not yet a solid picture regarding other resource aspects, like human resources or costs to involve stakeholders, though above figures on citizen participation can be read from that angle, but already based on the time spend to work on the documents, a vision and strategy document seems not to be a very "light" effort; a related appeal would be to take it therefore also as a "serious" exercise and not to see it as nonconsequential exercise, as stated at the beginning of this chapter.

The relation between time-effort put into the document and chosen horizons is of course an interesting aspect, as is the handling of time and the discussion of "futures" in general. As can be seen from the overview in Fig. 1, the most advanced horizons have been set to 2050, compared with the publication date definitely more than one generation ahead, which currently is considered to last around 25–30 years. The analysis looked also into the average "run-time" of the documents, which amounts to slightly more than 17 years, not much different from classic master plans. Put differently, vision documents operate with a time horizon between a half and a full generation. The research did not go into details yet, like assessing the actual implementation time required for the formulated ambitions. In some cases, follow-up processes are indicated, but the actual state can only be established on a
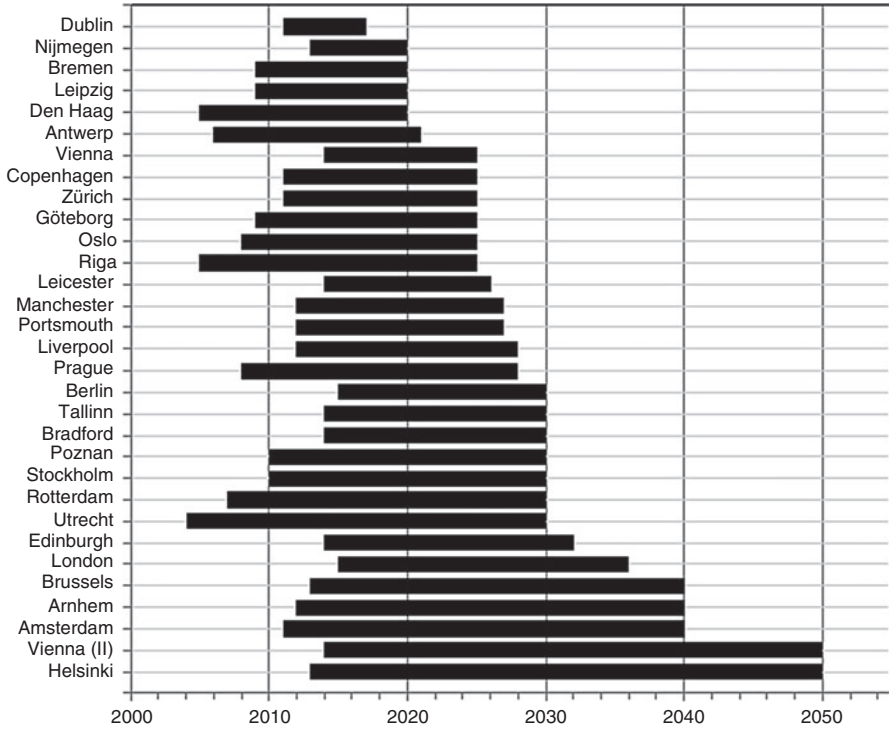
Fig. 1 Time horizons (sorted by most extensive horizon)

case-by-case basis. The documents neither provide much information about interim checkpoints nor other moments of reflection.

In a book on anticipation, the above presented observations invite for an interpretation: In a way, the visions formulated in the set of documents seem to be a kind of "instant future." The future is formulated and ends at the same time; the actual implementation time probably required for any of the visions does not play such an important role. In that respect, the future can be seen as anticipated for the moment of closing the documents – and it is opened up again for a not further specified implementation. But, does it really matter to speak about 2020-2035-2050 in a vision document? At this moment and on the basis of the current document analysis, which leaves out the expectations and perceptions of actors who continue working with the vision, time and time horizons are essentially abstract units, where the future is just a projected continuation for which current times, like for instance the aspect of achieved quality of life, provide the stencil. In a way, the chosen material or ethic normative dimensions of the visions are very common sense and less challenging. This is visible when searching for ideas of a deeper or radical ambition; there are no ideas outside boxes, neither radical narratives nor really disruptive elements which would challenge the chosen horizons and which would ask for different development horizons. For example, no city region considers a really challenging counter strategy

to the more growth and higher quality of life motto. The visioning is done in rather small and measured steps, using benchmarks from the currently experienced world. The interaction with futures and the anticipation comes in very restricted measures.

Visions for Metropolitan Development

The approach to vision making starts from a hypothesis: vision making creates a momentum for steering and managing complex metropolitan spaces. A starting point was the observation of large-scale media events, but also personal involvement in a vision-making process which had the intention to create a metropolitan space (Ache 2011). Vision making can be understood as embedded in the on-going restructuration of spatial relations, driven by several trends, including globalization, neoliberalization, and differentiation, and embedded in the information age (Castells 2010). As can be learned from the documents, metropolitan spaces are certainly objects of strategy formation. Besides high-flyer examples, like Paris, there is also the "everyday" of vision making outside media-relevant projects, in various localities and cross-planning systems. Planning practice uses vision making frequently in informal and nonbinding ways. Compared with that, vision making produces nevertheless heavy documents; it is a serious exercise, requiring much time and effort by large groups of actors. In our view, this process should be looked at more seriously, both in terms of practice but also academically; can we progress by seeing it just as hegemonic project (Gleeson 2012; Harding 2007; E. J. McCann 2001; Pinder 2005)? Or, can we return to the classic notion formulated by Burnham, challenging us to conceive spaces (and plans) that "stir the blood" of people?

A first, and admittedly very broad-brush, thematic overview is provided in Table 3. This analysis is based on a close reading of core vision formulation; empty fields in the table do not indicate that the respective aspect is not at all present; rather it is a presentation of emphases. One can see that most of the visions formulate ambitions related to the first four columns of the table: quality of life; economic competitiveness; social issues; sustainable development. Actors formulate in visions a concern for a general quality of life in the respective core cities. Likewise, economic growth and competitiveness are almost a "must," as is a concern for citizens in terms of opportunities or provisions of services. Sustainability is a leading concept, defined in various ways. In many cases, the vision is formulated with a view toward global and European competition, claiming a position for the respective city, and in some cases the region. Classical fields like infrastructure come already with a clear distance after other issues; however, urban mobility and its preconditions are seen and formulated as important themes. Surprisingly, the governance of the modern city or city region is regarded less of a concern. Three instances talk about this specifically, calling for an "effective" municipal administration, inviting "citizen's participation," and, for Istanbul, identifying the need of a "metropolitan management." The latter is a very interesting occurrence; given the metropolitan space that Istanbul forms, with 14 million inhabitants and about 40 individual municipalities.

Table 3 Overview of thematic fields addressed by visions

City	Quality of life	Competitiveness	Social issues	Sustainable	Global view	Infrastructure	Governance	Comment
Vienna (2014)	x	x	x	x				
Vienna (smart, 2014)	x			x				Comprehensive innovation
Antwerp (2006)								Big results with small steps
Brussels (2013)		x	x	x				
Prague (2008)		x	x	x		x	x	Friendly management of the city
Copenhagen (2011)	x	x	x	x	x			Nr 1 bike city in the world
Tallinn (2014)	x	x	x		x			
Helsinki (2013)					x	x		Urban life born out of encounters btw people, for which a great city offers spaces and opportunities
Berlin (2015)	x	x	x	x				Responsible and modern in community action
Bremen (2009)	x	x	x					Sense of citizenship and shared aims and projects
Leipzig (2009)	x	x	x		x			Reference to Leipzig charter
Dublin (2011)	x	x	x	x	x	x		
Milan (2014)	x	x	x	x	x			Smart city

(continued)

Table 3 (continued)

City	Quality of life	Competitiveness	Social issues	Sustainable	Global view	Infrastructure	Governance	Comment
Riga (2005)	x	x	x					Professional servicing the inhabitants
Amsterdam (2011)		x		x	x			Core city of a European metropolitan region
Arnhem (2012)								City as playground, define the course, capture opportunities
Den Haag (2005)					x			World city by the sea
Nijmegen (2013)	x	x						a city of all times
Rotterdam (2007)	x	x			x	x		In terms of knowledge and innovation most important harbor city in Europe
Utrecht (2004)	x	x	x					Randstad relation
Oslo (2008)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	Where citizen's participation is encouraged
Poznan (2010)	x	x						Metropolitan city . . . bases its development on knowledge
Göteborg (2009)	x	x	x	x				Segregation will be turned into integration giving everyone a chance to take part in and affect the future of their city
Stockholm (2010)	x	x	x	x	x	x		Stockholm-Mälar region
Zürich (2011)	x	x	x	x	x	x		2000-watt-society

City (Year)							Description
Istanbul (2007)		x	x		x	x	x	Restructuring the management of the metropolis through strategic planning principles
Bradford (2014)	x	x	x		x			Key driver of the Leeds City region
Edinburgh (2014)	x	x	x		x	x		
Leicester (2014)	x	x			x			Does not place a burden on the planet that we will come to regret in future years
Liverpool (2012)	x	x	x		x	x		Global city at the heart of the city region
London (2015)	x	x				x		Excel among global cities
Manchester (2012)	x	x	x		x	x	x	
Portsmouth (2012)	x	x						Unrivalled maritime heritage

An outlier is the surprising vision statement, which can be found in a document by the city of Goteborg (City of Goteborg 2009). Already in 2009, way ahead of current debates on our societies capacity for integration, the vision document formulates that "segregation will be turned into integration giving everyone a chance to take part in and affect the future of their city." This is one of the few cases were a core vision formulation addresses a challenging social agenda. The other case is Oslo (City of Oslo 2008), proclaiming: "Oslo will be a tolerant, socially inclusive capital that embraces diversity and a wide range of lifestyles. It will be a city in which it is easy to succeed and difficult to fail." Especially, the closing of the sentence is worth highlighting: "a city where it is difficult to fail"; one wonders whether in terms of life at large, job ambitions, or educational achievements? Certainly a formulation that resonates with the established call, planning is the "creation of hope" (Friedmann 2002).

Returning to a more abstract reflection, the documents in the sample express a vision, but one mostly embedded in a kind of local and realist view of the future; the vision is linked to rather pragmatic views on strategy and plan making. For the latter, we might accept that planning needs to resort to a kind of *Realpolitik*, in all difficulty, which this power function (in the sense of Foucault) is confronted with; but where is the utopian element?

The latter aspect requires an additional comment: concrete visions reporting concrete futures are the standard, seemingly; the challenging and ambitious speculative visions on futures have not been found in the set of cases. The visions documented in this survey represent more of a consensual view, a gospel of shared world-views operating with actual currencies, especially from the smart city debate, comprehensive sustainability ideas, or selected global challenges. This can be problematic in many ways. One perspective is known from innovation studies trying to understand path dependency in regional development contexts (Ache 2000a, b). The question is whether we can create real transformative capacity without an element that clearly sits offside the trodden paths and that creates friction and with that a radically different future (Albrechts 2015)?

Summary: Vision Making – Unleashing Anticipation?

In the conceptual part of this chapter, an attempt was made to transpose anticipation to the urban context. The anticipation properties can be seen in the actors interacting with the given urban situation and negotiating about futures, by either building, in the literal sense of the word, concrete futures, or by reusing and experimenting with urban voids, or, for most of the empirical part presented in this chapter, by participating in vision-making processes. In the latter case, actors simply follow the wish to position an urban region in view of challenges of a rapidly changing environment and make it fit for the future. The build environment and actors interact in various ways during the construction of futures. The hypothesis that guides this chapter and its analysis of the principal objective can be formulated as: if we can imagine, we can manage. If we can develop an idea and with that see the urban in view of changing environmental challenges, we will be capable of managing the urban complexity, the other property that the spatial system reveals.

In terms of an interpretation of the current observations, the visions expressed by participating actors in the published documents are rather a repetition of the "real" (Pinder 2013), or realism, and are definitely no experiments in dialectical utopianism. What is in particular absent is the element of "strife" (Pløger 2004), referring to Mouffe's theory of agonism (Mouffe 2000). As can be read from Pløger's (2004) analysis, the processes are at the moment more geared to a consensus style of operation, including the excessive transparency in the case of Bradford. This is suspicious of a governance style that is based on a deeply ingrained governmentality; i.e., the actors have learned and continue learning to be good visionaries (Pløger (2004) refers to good democrats, p 81). Participation is geared toward the elimination of conflict; consensus is the norm set for the process. Vision making is then not more than a normalizing discourse (Pløger (2004, p 80) refers here to Huxley (2002)). However, what is needed instead is a process where we move from a minimalist consensual solution of antagonistic behavior to the cocreative attitude of adversaries.

Reflecting on a planners' role in that view, it will be less of an issue to "control the future" but rather instead to "midwife the future," as Ganis (2015) points out. Instead of knowing the exact outcomes in advance to implement a future according to "plan," we might rather be looking into trajectories and possibilities (Ganis quoting Hillier and Healey (2008)). Instead of owning the future as experts with capacity to control, for instance legally, the role changes toward stewardship and "place becomes a 'participant' in the 'flow of action' and entrusts the design professional to deliver a relevant place. As such, control of the future implies that there is a fixed expectation for a place and midwifery of the future implies that there is no fixed expectation for a place; rather, the place becomes what it needs to be." (Ganis 2015, p. 4).

However, what the place "needs to be" will be established in processes that open horizons. In line with the utopianism formulated by Lefebvre, the vision process needs to challenge the "closing of political horizons." Building on seminal ideas developed by Lefebvre, Pinder (2013) provides hereto some propositions: we should uncover the desires and dreams that underpin conceptions of urbanism today; we should . . . transduce from given real's to possible's; the focus should be on everyday life and its critique (with a reference to Ernst Bloch (1985 [1954]) and his "concrete utopia"); experiments and invention is significant; and finally, "demanding the impossible is as realistic as necessary."

These comments provide very important dimensions: we tend to see exercises which try to formulate visions for future development frequently as consolidating and comforting, and also *utopistic*, in the sense of being nonconsequential. However, looking back into the writings of Lefebvre, it is about time to take these exercises serious; as has been shown, a lot of resources (human, time) go into the process. In a way reformulating another claim of Lefebvre, there is a *right to utopianism*, and vision making creates "moments of experiments in dialectical utopianism" – or in other words connected to Lefebvre and quoted by Harvey (2012) in the preface to rebel cities, "to create an alternative urban life that is less alienated, more meaningful and playful but, as always with Lefebvre, conflictual and dialectical, open to becoming, to encounters (both fearful and pleasurable), and to the perpetual pursuit of the unknowable novelty." And for that, we would need to develop the urban properties to anticipate and vision much further.

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