

the Great Planning Game

Elaborated by

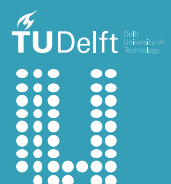
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Based on a text by

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This exercise is based on: SEHESTED, K. 2010. Urban Planners as Network Managers and Metagovernors, Planning Theory & Practice 10:2, 245-263. The author has asserted her intellectual property.

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People in the group:

1. FIRST STEP:

Write down the objectives of your regional strategy (Q3). What does your strategy aim to achieve?

(Don't forget to mention the place and the issues you want to tackle.)

2. SECOND STEP:

From the cards provided to you, choose the planning role that better expresses the position and understanding of the group about your role as planners and designers.

THEN

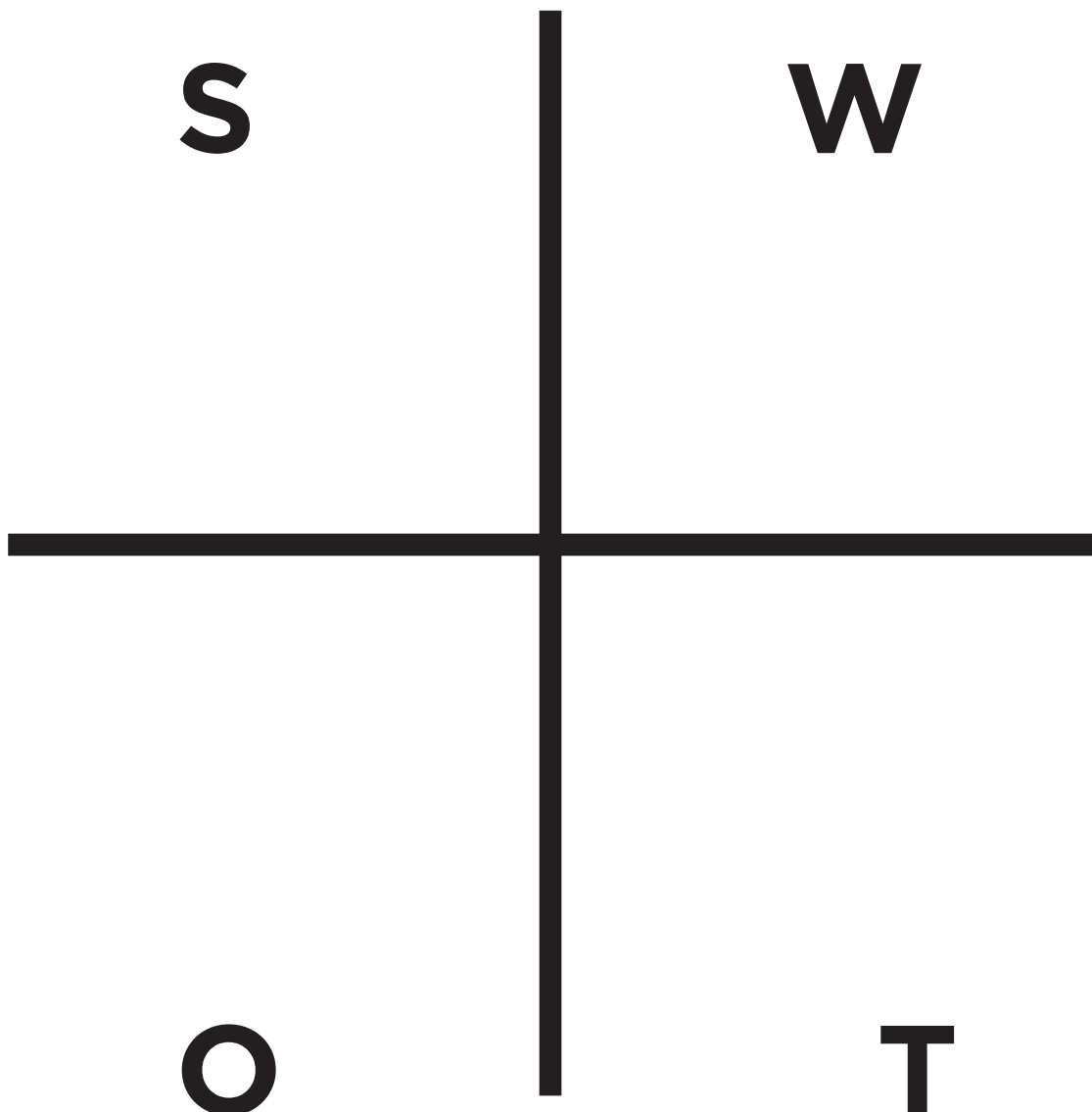
Choose a "second best" (another role that the group also finds relevant).

Write down the 'types of planners' you chose:

3. STEP:

What are the drivers and hampers of development in the region? What are challenges and opportunities?

(mini SWOT)

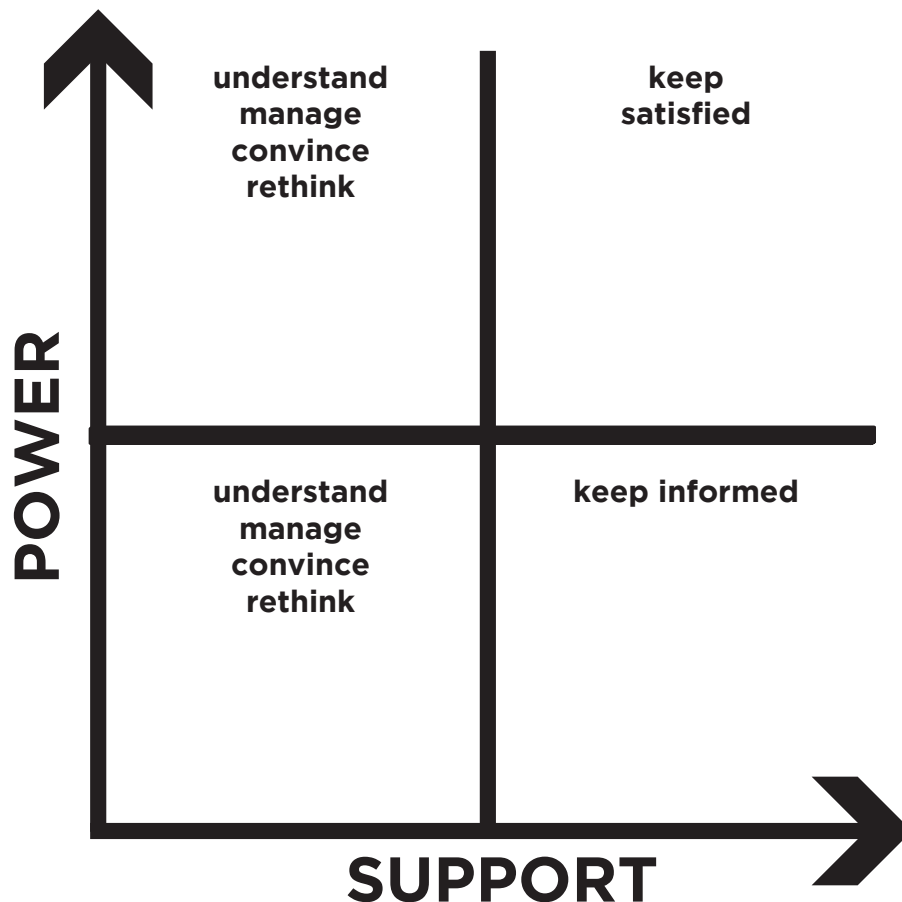


4. STEP:

Make a list of 3 policy priorities for the region, relevant to your spatial strategy, based solely on the values of your 'type' of planner. Remember this is a role playing game.

5. STEP:

Make a list of Stakeholders. Who is against those spatial policy points? Who is favourable? Who benefits? Who loses?



6. STEP: Let's debate!

Present your 3 policy priorities to the other groups. Do they agree with them? Can you defend your ideas and fundament them with evidence? In other words, are they evidence based? Whose interests do they cater for? Whose interests do they contradict?

the traditional planner

I am an old-school planner. I was trained to do my job and therefore I believe I am fully capacitated to take the right decisions.

I believe in the power of the government to make people's lives better. In order to achieve that, comprehensive planning is the best tool we have at our disposal.

By planning carefully and in a detailed way, we will achieve good results for all. I like the traditional ways of organising the work.

I am the chief planner; therefore I expect my subordinates will listen to my instructions. We strive for the general good and sometimes I have the feeling we are more concerned about the public than the elected members of our government. Our adversaries are greedy investors who would ruin our city with huge shopping centres and weird ideas about mixed housing.

the communicative planner

I believe in participation. Democracy is the most important tool for real progress, because real progress IS democracy. You might wonder what that means. Let's say that by encouraging people to participate in decision-making, I widen the possibility of those people to share the gains of urban development. But most importantly, along the way they will acquire the knowledge and the tools to take a stronger stance in urban development and will be able to articulate solutions that benefit all. This is an important aspect of my profession and it is called democracy building. The process is as important as the final outcomes. Of course, in order to do all this, I must have great communication skills. I need to communicate complex ideas to people who have had no training. But don't be fooled: their knowledge is as important as the knowledge of professionals and I need to be able to help them articulate it. On the other hand, I also need to facilitate communication that will allow consensus building among different stakeholders with very disparate interests.

the strategic planner

I am a strategic planner. My objective is to develop strategies that will benefit all, but I am aware that elected politicians are the legitimate representatives of the people. This is why I work hard to seduce them with engaging visions and appealing scenarios, to guide their actions. I think planners must appeal to other professionals working with the city in order to formulate these visions. But sometimes I feel these professionals are not very practical. We need to engage investors as well, and the best way to do this is to offer investors opportunities via large urban projects. I find that large urban projects are the best tool to mobilise political and economic action. They are also an effective way to intervene in the spatial configuration of a city. These projects compose spatial strategies, with which we will achieve agreed goals.

the manager planner

I am a manager planner. I feel very close to my colleagues who call themselves "strategists". I believe it is all about having an effective strategy for urban development. But we will not have effective strategies if we cannot manage our relationship with investors and the private sector in general. We cannot deny that money is an essential factor: nothing can be achieved without investment. Who will pay for this, is generally my first question. But let's not forget that we are acting in benefit of the public. In order to do so, we need to listen to several actors, in an organised way, making use of the democratic instruments we have at our disposal. It is important that we keep public participation, but we need to manage it in a way that allows us to continue to be efficient. Too much participation can be disruptive and we don't have that much time.

the market planner

I like to call myself a market planner. It is not so much that I am working FOR the market. Rather, I am trying to realise projects within the sphere of economic opportunity, and in order to do that, I need to engage with private actors. I am familiar with the logic of business. I feel the public needs to accept co-responsibility for the city's development and it is my responsibility to create close relationships between the parties with the necessary resources in order to promote development. But this is done in the realm of democracy, with the legal tools at our disposal. In order to make the most of these tools, I need to articulate the contacts between decision makers and investors. I also need to propose new tools with which investors can participate in urban development in a fair way. Of course citizen participation is important, but it is crucial to manage this participation in order to avoid standstills.

the process planner

I like to call myself a process planner. This means that my main task is to create democratic processes that can integrate all relevant actors in order to make common decisions regarding the right kind of urban development. I feel that all affected parties should be heard or integrated in the process before decisions are made. Is this time consuming? Of course it is, but this is the price of true democracy. Besides, by doing that I create ownership of decisions and decrease the prospect of our actions being contested. My main skills are communication and networking. Of course I need to be a good communicator if I want to integrate non-professional actors in the planning process. I am something between a pedagogue and a process consultant. As a good teacher, I rely on narratives to engage all kinds of actors, not only professional ones, and certainly not only investors. I want to involve the common citizen in decision-making. My advocacy planner friends and I work quite well together.

the advocacy planner

I am an advocacy planner. You might wonder what that means, but let's just say that my main objective is to defend the interest of those who don't have a voice in urban development. We live in an unfair world. Many groups don't have a voice in urban development (women, minorities, migrants, even children are poorly represented!). Resources are not fairly distributed. As a planning professional, it is my moral duty to fight for those who have the least, and to guaranty that they will get a fair share of the fruits of development, either by allocating resources to the areas where these people live or by finding ways to redistribute the gains. I do that by applying several new tools at my disposal, like progressive taxation or taxation of unproductive land. I accept the market society of course, but there are ways to regulate the market and to redistribute profit in a fair way. After all, when investors realise gains in a certain location they are generally benefitting from infrastructures built with tax money, and all the positive externalities created by society and especially by all those around them