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Urban peripheries: The political dynamics of planning projects

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INTRODUCTION

About 6 kilometers from Les Halles and the Centre Pompidou, we find an area that does not look like the Paris of monuments, fashion commercial centers, or royal heritages. It does not even look like the known La Courneuve, with its large social housing blocks of LeCorbusian allure. While walking from the beautiful Parc de la Villette along the périphérique to the West, we get lost in large congested roads, unused train tracks, large warehouses, surface parking lots, football and tennis courts, and scattered pockets of houses for those who cannot afford to live closer to the city center. Yet, we recognize the same lively and dense atmosphere of the French capital and something tells us that this place is not simply *out of* the city. We discover a certain dynamism in this place: new buildings are popping up with contemporary, but not futuristic, architecture, surprisingly combining refurbished 20th century red-brick structures with new offices. Yet, our walk in the area leaves us awkwardly wondering what neighborhood we are in; we see sporadic metro stops, less dense bus lines, and fewer commercial activities.

We are similarly surprised after getting off the 10 minute ferry from Amsterdam's central station to NDSM. Not more than 4 kilometers from the central station, and just across the IJ-river, we find another intriguing place. The large ship yards and warehouses are far removed from the cute houses of the Jordaan. They are also different from the ambitiously and alternatively designed houses of Java-eiland, Borneo-eiland, or IJ-burg. The ferry leads us to a place that looks partly abandoned, but that reveals new life upon closer examination. Glass and steel structures are built around the cranes and industrial buildings used to build ship components. Here we see history becoming an esthetic value for the urban. While biking back to the city, we recognize pockets of companies, small warehouses, large retail, student houses, and all kinds of small enterprise, all adjacent to the houses of the 1950s.

Our impression is the same heading just 5 kilometers north of Milan's marvelous Dome. After a brief trip on the Metro 1, we understand we have crossed the border of Milan only because of the extra charge on the ticket. In Sesto San Giovanni we see pockets of light brown and yellow houses, a lively neighborhood just next to the heavy traffic of Viale Italia, Viale Sesto-Marelli, and Viale Edison. This space is different from the area of Pirelli-Bicocca, with its large crowds of students, and the areas of Giambellino or Quarto Oggiaro. We see many companies, both small and large, manufacturing metals, glass, electronics, and plastic. Next to them we find pieces of universities, professional schools for chefs, or a new project for the creative manufacturing of clothes. Yet, walking here is not easy, with large distances and voids to circumvent.

These places tell us a story of transition and of place making; a transformation that does not demolish and rebuild but that attempts to reconstitute, rehabilitate, and readapt the existent space piece by piece. The northeast of Paris, the northwest of Amsterdam and the northwest of Milan share the common legacy of being places of social and economic change. At the same time, they have apparently jumped over the business led large scale redevelopment of the 1990s and they have not yet been colonized by booming real estate markets or futuristic districts for financial economies. However, they are neither like homogenous clusters of social housing target of extensive urban regeneration policies. They are not the center of the city, nor the outskirts of it. They are at the interface of what we know as 'the consolidated city', but at the beginning of the expanded metropolitan area. They are urban but have an embryonic *urbanity*. This book investigates how major political forces define the future urban agendas of these places.

WHAT IS THE URBAN PERIPHERY?

«During the past thirty years the growth of outer cities has both decentred and recentred the metropolitan landscape, bearing down and reconstituting the prevailing monocen-

tric urbanism that once anchored all centrifugal and centripetal forces around a singular gravitational node. Deindustrialization has emptied out many of the largest urban-industrial zones and nucleations of Fordism, while post-fordist reindustrialization has concentrated high-technology industries in new industrial spaces far from the old downtowns. These greenfields [...] are not just satellites but have become distinctive cities and gravitational nodes in their own right.»

(Soja, 2000, p.242)

The spatial organisation of today's metropolis has been defined as polycentric, fractal and kaleidoscopic, asymmetric, and edgeless (Hall, 1997). Outer sectors of metropolitan areas are becoming central targets of large public and private investments. The first and second industrial extensions of cities, built in the early 20th century, are witnessing great dynamics, even under the current economic crisis. After decades of suburbanization to the fringe, the inner city rings are gaining momentum due to stricter regulations on urban expansion, declining subsidies for private transport, and a general increase in awareness of the environmental limits of city growth. Peripheral areas are witnessing new social, political, and economic dynamics, with a combination of pockets of poverty, emerging productive clusters, and increased residential densities. Both markets and governments are more concerned with their redevelopment, while spatial planning is trying to understand, address, and even govern these trends by means of more polycentric spatial concepts.

The 'periphery' investigated in the book is the dynamic space which lies at the core of today's expanding metropolitan areas but has traditionally been viewed as an outer location. Yet, it is hard to define it in geo-morphological terms, and the different cities present different urban scenarios. They are not suburbs, in-between lands, or peri-urban spaces; they are urbanized zones that somehow occupy the in-between layers between what we can define as the inner city and what is generally considered suburban. Throughout the book, these spaces are defined as 'inner periphery', 'border areas',

‘interfaces’, and ‘urban peripheries’. All these terms respectively accentuate the geographical, functional, and socio-economic specificity of the same spatial pattern, depending on the specific argument of each chapter. *Inner peripheries* stress that these spaces are significantly different from outskirts, residential suburbs, or hybrid ‘in-between’ urban areas. Inner peripheries are the densely urbanized zones just outside what we generally define as the inner city. The term *border areas* punctuates the gap between spatial patterns and jurisdictional borders. Peripheries are thus spatially continuous and overtake institutionalized borders of governmental action. They entail a discrepancy between spatial dynamics and governmental dynamics, wherein spaces of ‘authority’ can be defined. Yet, the notion of cross-border areas embodies the potential of *connectivity* that the urban periphery has today. They become policy instruments to bridge urban policies and to address the governmental fragmentation that has for a long time characterized European and American metropolitan areas. Lastly, the term *interface* is often used in the text to accentuate the policy value of the periphery. The urban periphery lays at the cross-road between consolidated inner cities and upcoming urban nodes of regional and even national scale. The periphery can be at the juncture between airports, large business districts or huge suburban areas, and the cultural, historical, and economic core of the city. In other cases, it can be an area of local investment, or attempts to create new polarities.

The challenges for spatial planning are related to the necessity to define paradigms that understand and govern space in times of weak economic growth, stable real estate markets, and in the life choices of post-modern households. These new paradigms must be geared to the polycentric and networked conformation of cities. The major fascination of this research comes from awareness that the periphery is a *laboratory* for planning. The innovative potential of the periphery lies in two particular challenges for European urban and city-regional agendas.

The first challenge is the need to experiment, define, activate and institutionalize new *spatial qualities* in these outer areas. Planners are concerned with the typologies of urban and living spaces and

the different techniques to combine multiple land usages. They address the creative use of history and symbols in postmodern design, and try to successfully realize goals of sustainability into new forms of living. A challenge of spatial innovation springs from the gap between the great opportunities of experimentation in these areas and the tendency to address their problems with established planning norms and procedures (Downs 2005; Wilkinson 2012). The periphery stimulates planners and designers to adopt imaginative practices of urban change based on reuse, temporary development, perspectivism, flexibility, and smart technology solutions. However, because these locations are conceptualized as ‘urban’ spaces, these energies encounter consolidated regulatory frameworks (e.g. zoning), established decision making procedures, and enrooted ideologies.

The second challenge is that planning in the periphery requires a coordination of policies across jurisdictional borders and across tiers of government. This means managing the disruptive parochialism that inter-municipal competition might generate. Many of these models of ‘adversarial cooperation’ (Salet, et al., 2003) become problematic when it comes to coordinating land use planning in the border areas. It is thus important to look at how different planning agents cooperate or conflict in the practice of land use planning (Kantor et al. 2013; Lefèvre 2002). The rise of outer polarities certainly reveals the limits of metropolitan governance. Peripheral development is a practice that facilitates an understanding of broader dynamics of power configurations in polycentric city-regions.

The dynamic urbanization of urban peripheral ‘rest spaces’ creates a new agenda for collective action in search of spatial quality. Contextualized by local conditions, this agenda addresses such major issues as:

- the livability and environmental quality of the urbanizing peripheral spaces;
- the fractal nature of these spaces (displacing different urban activities such as housing, work, and recreation in separated specializations);

- the social polarization of urban peripheral spaces (creating new pockets of poverty);
- the selectivity and incompleteness of accessibility;
- the lacking sense of place of the embryonic spaces of urbanity.

A fascination with this dynamic process of urbanizing peripheral spaces and the inherent challenges for collective action and spatial planning underlies the *research question* of the present study. The book explores how these challenges of spatial quality are addressed under the fragmentary and asymmetric conditions of power in bolstering urban peripheries. These are the heuristic challenges that work as an umbrella of the whole work. They are addressed by looking at specific development projects in peripheral areas, framed within the power relationship between core city, market interests, and national/upper governmental planning strategies.

THE FIELDS OF TENSION AND MAJOR URBAN POWERS

«Because actual development policy grows out of a set of political activities, it behoves us to pay attention to arrangements by which policy is made and conflict is managed. If some arrangements are flawed in some fundamental way we cannot expect to have a good policy in the long run. Development policy will reflect the weakness of political arrangements.»

(Stone, 1987, p.282)

The exploration of this complex and dynamic subject matter will be guided by a conceptual framework. Each chapter makes use of particular sensitizing concepts, placed within this framework (Blumer, 1954). A sensitizing concept does not have the full explanatory power of hypothetical deduction, but it focuses the explorative research with a similar heuristic load. The basic sensitizing concept

of this study is that many actors with different backgrounds and different resources have stakes in the peripheral urban spaces, so their manifold interactions will be investigated as a permanent ‘process of negotiation’. The crucial notion of this concept is that the ‘field of negotiation’ is driven by asymmetric powers. The periphery is conceptualized at the center of a field of tension between three major sources of urban power: the core city, with its traditional political and economic position of domination; the strategies of market actors, namely pioneer investors looking to rent land in outer areas; and the upper levels of government, both national and/or regional (depending on the case) with their specific impulse to develop strategic poles in metropolitan areas. The tensions between these actors determine the planning outcomes of peripheral development. The following triangle (Fig.I) summarizes the major conceptual model.

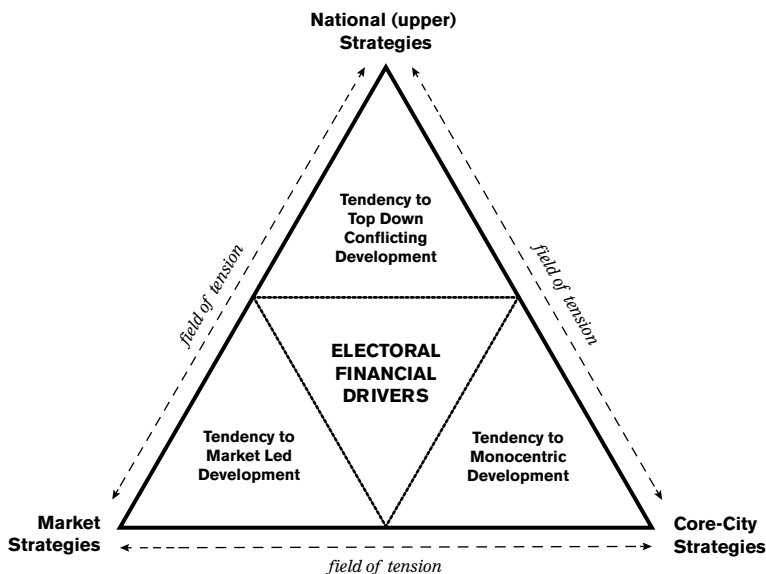


Fig. I. Conceptual model to study peripheral urban development projects.

The political construction of city-regions has been a dominant object of study in the past decade (Jonas and Ward, 2007). A great deal of research has been conducted to investigate how the emergence of new regional (polycentric) spaces of production and consumption are the result of an assemblage of these three major interests (Allen and Cochrane, 2007). Despite processes of decentralization and deregulation, national and upper levels of government have continued playing a role in urban development and have adapted their devices of authority to affect city-regional growth policies. Core cities have been, and still are, major players in shaping metropolitan transformations. In Europe, they are still the economic core of their regions and, despite increased salience, outer poles still depend on their performance. There is still a dominant view of core city governments in planning practice. Large cities often build upon established political linkages with national government to push for policies that reinforce centripetal development forces within networked spatial configurations. Lastly, shifting market strategies are generally considered as major factors in regional planning. Real estate investors, large developers, and international agents are increasingly interested in the yields that the inner periphery can offer. In doing so they play a major role in lobbying public city-regional policies (and zoning) to influence selective land pressure on these areas.

The new territorial salience of peripheral locations therefore expresses and leads a shifting power balance of these agents. It is not unlikely that different alliances among these major forces lead to different forms of outer development. Further, cohesive coalitions between core city and developers might reinforce the dependency of peripheral areas on the core city. This may be even more so the case when national governments also subsidize this connection through extensive infrastructural policies. This has been largely the case in the suburbanization of the 1950s-60s as well as in Europe's new town policies. Accordingly, strong coalitions between the state and large investors might lead to parachuted development in the outer poles, with critical implications on the spatial, social,

and economic continuity with the core city. Market led strategies in the periphery with a looser role for national and regional governments might lead to forms of peripheral development similar to what we have called urban sprawl for many years, gaining more yields of urban development in open areas. These spaces might be characterized by a less crystallized and more disconnected urban structure. The question of whether the negotiations between the different stakeholders work out in practice according to the dominance of the resources mentioned above will be empirically investigated in the selected case studies.

The articulation of the three major sources of power is informed by an interpretation of urban regime theory, which provides a political-economic approach to investigate how structured power relations shape urban development. The explanatory power of urban regime theory has been largely discussed in the literature and it is not exempt from critique. Ultimately, it is a conceptual model tailored over a traditional (American) distinction between downtown and suburb, core and periphery. Yet, it is one of the most resistant concepts of the post-Fordist literature as it 'provides a language and frame of reference through which reality can be examined and leads theorists to ask questions that might not otherwise occur' (Judge et al, 1995:3). In this book, urban regime theory is preferential to other models of urban political analysis because it frames urban development within the structuring effects of political and economic coalitions (Ward et al, 2011). It helps the researcher to analytically unpack the problem of peripheral development and urban politics by framing peripheral development as the dependent variable of a reorganization of power structures in city-regions. The theory conceptualizes the inter-dependency between economic and political logics of urban policy; between logics of economic growth and accumulation of consensus. It moreover looks at specific agents of these political dynamics and at the techniques used to mobilize resources, political consensus, and finance to enforce urban agendas. These actors are mayors and local parties, groups of technicians and planning experts, and incoming real

estate investors. Particular mention of regime theory is found in chapter 2, where a cross-border coalition is evident, and in chapter 3, where the power-holding capacity of local political coalitions is discussed in the light of strategic urban projects.

A major critique is that urban regime theory is not geared to explain European urban politics. Kantor and Savitch argue that *“a major obstacle to comparative research [in urban studies] is the lack of viable middle-level theories that are capable of embracing nations with very different histories and social life”* (Kantor and Savitch 2005: 136). The concept of urban regime has thus often been ‘stretched’ to embrace all sorts of policy contexts and dynamics (Mossberger and Stoker, 2002). The present study avoids these problems by adopting a looser definition of regime, but maintains the focus on the conflicting practices of coalition building between state, core city, and market interests. It looks at border areas as the policy object of this power struggle and addresses the inter-municipal level to look at how these actors instrumentally deal with peripheral development. Lastly, the European planning context demands more attention to the political linkages between local executives, regional councils, and national cabinets. It also demands awareness of the fiscal structures of cities, the larger transfers from the top, and the link between local leaders (mayors and aldermen) and nationally organized political parties.

REFINING THE CONCEPT: THE POLITICAL NATURE OF PERIPHERAL DEVELOPMENT

«Urban politics has diverged from the broader discipline to the extent that it has become a black hole where broader political science insights are rarely felt.»

(Clark and Crebs, 2012, p.2)

The concept outlined above has to be refined in order to investigate the drivers of change in different urban contexts. The outcomes in urbanizing peripheries differ from city to city and even differ within the same urban regions for different sorts of urban space. Thus, we have to refine the search for an explanation of different outcomes by pre cising the mechanisms within the above mentioned generic sources of power. Here, a further elaboration of the concept is needed. As the present research is concerned with the challenges of collective action with regards to prevailing problems in urbanizing the urban peripheries, I will focus the research on the political dimension of collective action in particular. This is not to neglect the role of market in the search for possible explanations (one of the major pillars in the conceptual scheme) but its role will only be investigated in indirect ways, namely in the way that politics responds to shifting markets strategies.

The present work does not attempt to simply map the (in)coherence between the triangle of powers and the spatial outcomes of planning policies in the periphery. It investigates the processes that lead to changes in this triangle. I will search for the mechanisms that lead the state, core cities, and the market to redefine their policies towards areas located at the border of cities. In doing so I focus first on the specific intergovernmental relationships between the involved municipalities (including the asymmetry between core city and smaller surrounding municipalities) and their relationships with higher tiers of government. Secondly, I focus in particular on the political drivers of peripheral development, namely in the practice of political confrontation between these actors and their responses to shifting market strategies. The political dimension is not just governmental but also encompasses social definitions of politics, as will be explained later. The book shows how the periphery becomes an object of political contention, instrumentalized to advance strategies for gaining and holding power.

Since the pivotal work of Rittel and Webber (1973), planners have agreed that governing urban change (also) involves a series of arbitrary considerations, politically built on contextualized beliefs

and norms of collective action. Planning decisions are built on the combined mechanisms of 'substantive rationality' (i.e. value rationality) (Weber, 1978) and historically established technical expectations. The 'urban question' has always been a political question for planners. The physical and functional shape of the 'city' has reflected particular forms of political organization and structures of power. *Civitas* and *urbs* are two sides of the same coin, reflecting the overlap between organized political power and living spaces. Cities have been generally interpreted as urban containers of political content (Isin, 2003). It is not surprising that the emerging polycentrism of city-regions has stimulated a large debate on the changed political configurations of power. After the decay of modernist planning doctrines, spatial planning has consensually been recognized as a 'politicized' process of decision making over the use of land. In the 1970s, the overlap between planning and politics was at an apex, with the urban planning question intimately attached to the social question. During the socio-economic restructuring of Fordism, planning became an object of political and partisan debate. The 'politicization' of planning (Castells, 1978, van der Cammen and De Klerk, 2012) was evident in the way political parties and political agendas started to place the urban question at the top of their agendas and started to think of urban change as a tool to address broader issues of economic growth and social pacification.

The politics of planning entail a dynamic relationship between *polities, policies, politics, and parties* (Rhodes et al, 2006). The first entails the changed scale of organized political consensus and the formation of spaces of political negotiation. The second refers to the products of political negotiation and the profile of decisions taken. The third refers to the dynamic negotiation, trading, conflict, and struggle between societal interests in defining policies. The fourth specifically stresses the organization of societal demands into more or less coherent groups of interests. In this book, the periphery is a space where it is possible to understand the changes in these different components of urban politics. The emergence of

polycentric city-regions and the salience of outer poles (polities) are likely to reflect new structures and dynamics of power (politics). These include new players (among which are new political parties) that foster new urban agendas (policies).

A new spatial conformation of cities generates political responses to address emerging spatial, social, and economic questions (Savitch and Kantor, 2002). These responses are dependent on the strategies of powerful groups struggling to adapt their authority to new metropolitan spaces, and among these we find new and old political parties and groups. Notwithstanding the salience of parties and politicians, there seems to be a lack of investigation in their behavior and their tactics in political confrontations. According to Campbell, *“the interactions between planners and politicians at once structure and determine the nature of the decisions made and moreover ensure such decisions are rendered accountable through the role of politicians within a representative democracy. It is striking that while this relationship occupies a pivotal position within the planning activity it remains little discussed in the academic literature and is more generally shrouded in mystique and secrecy”* (2001:83). The response of political groups to urban change does not follow economic rationality, but it entails a combination of different rationalities. They are based on an instrumental use of ideologies, symbols, and rhetoric to accumulate consensus.

A fundamental schism may have occurred between academic research, planning practice, and politics since the 1970s, the years of ‘Marxist ascendancy’ (Hall, 1988). In those years, political economists established ‘the urban’ as the dependent variable in their research designs and shifted the focus to macro societal structures or, in Marxist terms, an expression of a superstructure over the ‘base’. Planning theory was questioned as a product of production relationships while the pro-activeness of planning agents in societal innovation became secondary (Low, 1990). Marxist theory faced the dilemma of either theorizing the origin of planning within the historical logic of capitalism or prescribing and advising possible planning actions. Ultimately, the Marxist logic became ‘strangely

quietist; it suggest that the planner retreats from planning altogether into the academic ivory tower' (Hall, 1988:339). The apparent division between a 'theory of planning' and a 'planning theory' (Faludi 1973) was, however, productive. It made us aware of the clear relationship between (global) economic restructuring and local responses and it has certainly explained the emergence of macro spatial patterns. Only recently have post-structuralist works attempted to explain the contextual differentiation of planning responses. Such an analytical division might also downplay the opportunity to conceptualize the role of planners in achieving innovation. Today, critical studies stress the de-politicization of planning and the a-political character of decision making. Planning practice is today criticized as a choreographed exercise of citizens.

I do not attempt to corroborate or falsify structural hypotheses, but I attempt to explain the multiple variations of metropolitan transformations by adding insights from an electoral and political perspective. I will shed light on the relationship between land use planning and electoral dynamics, and how the latter combines with economic trends, in order to make sense of peripheral development.

THE DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH AND METHODS

«Case studies often tackle subjects about which little is previously known or about which existing knowledge is fundamentally flawed. The case study typically presents original research of some sort. Indeed, it is the opportunity to study a single unit in great depth that constitutes one of the primary virtues of the case study method. If a writer were to restrict herself only to elements of the unit that were generalizable [...], a reader might justifiably complain. Such rigor would clarify the population of the primary inference, but it would also constitute a considerable waste of scholarly resources.»

(Gerring, 2004:345-356).

How could we explain the differentiation of responses in planning urban development policies for polycentric city-regions? Why do some metropolitan areas show clear responses to polycentric development while others do not? What are the drivers of changes to the redevelopment practices of peripheral areas?

The design of the research follows these questions with an explorative approach. It is not a completely open investigation as it is heuristically guided by different sensitizing concepts in each chapter. There is a major hypothesis: I assume a field of negotiation between multiple agents at stake, with different positional backgrounds and different resources that condition new processes of urbanization via asymmetric positions of power. Three major forms of power condition the field of negotiation: core city, state, and market. This generic concept is further specified in order to explain different outcomes in different urban peripheries. Referring to the research question, which addresses the challenges of collective action in the spatial planning of the transforming urban areas, the research will be focused on the political dimension of processes of collective action to explore and elucidate the mechanisms that explain peripheral development. It problematizes peripheral development as a dependent variable of changed geo-political conditions in metropolitan areas, characterized by emerging political fractures and expressed in the rise of new electoral constituencies. These changed conditions are investigated through the realignment of upper levels of government, core city economies, and market pressures over locations outside city borders. This study aims to understand *why*, given certain spatial, functional, and economic conditions in today's metropolitan areas, we see particular planning approaches to peripheral development occur while others seem to fail to address the challenges of collective action.

Planning research and practice is widely interested in whether progressive and adaptive planning approaches can be arranged to respond to the emergence of new salient areas of development. This means redefining and reframing the concept of periphery, employing new planning tools, establishing inter-municipal cooperation, and promoting innovative practices of spatial innovation and urban

design. Assuming that these political configurations are dominated by national planning agents, core cities, and market interests, I expect that the profile of peripheral projects will change according to the electoral and financial relationship between these three sources of urban power. The study is guided by the underlying conceptual expectation that a shift in urban peripheral planning might occur when national governments, core cities, and market agents operate on peripheral spaces in order to complement electoral and profit interests.

This is a *case study* and it is not oriented to law-like generalization (Gerring, 2004). By observing three specific cases I attempt to enrich the existent empirical understanding of the power reorganization in planning polycentrism. The following classification applies:

Unit of analysis: I focus on areas located at the border of core cities, but whose planning also involves external neighboring municipalities. The study is limited to three European cities: Paris, Milan, and Amsterdam. There is a high internal variation in the unit of analysis on the specific variables of interest (see below). Based on these units, the study advances a better understanding of other more or less similar cases, providing an illustration (and thus the base for further hypothesis) of the political-electoral mechanisms driving peripheral change.

Variables of main concern: the specific types of planning projects undertaken in the periphery are the dependent variable. I focus on the combined variation of three independent variables: the involvement of the national government, the core city's strategies of metropolitan growth, and the type of market pressure on the periphery. Looking at the combined changes of these variables, I infer on the particular planning choices made in the selected locations of interest. As for any comparative (and replicable) study, it is fundamental to select variables that can be measured systematically (Kantor and Savitch, 2005). The research focuses on the variation

of the relationship between these three subjects in peripheral development (namely the conceptual triangle illustrated in the last chapter), conditioned by particular electoral and financial strategies.

Cases: the cases have been selected to maximize the variation of the dependent variable (the projects), keeping contextual spatial and economic conditions similar (the periphery). Within the unit of analysis (European urban peripheries) I selected three major cases to investigate: Paris Nord Est (PNE), Amsterdam ZaanIJ (ANW), and Milan-Sesto San Giovanni ex-Falck Area (Falck). The selection of these cases is further justified in chapter 5. Given the explorative character of the research, the cases are chosen coherently with their spatial, historical, and functional conditions. The three projects involve areas that:

- a) are of *comparable size* (respectively 2m sqm, 2.5m sqm, and 1.5m sqm);
- b) show similar urban histories and similar visions, although with some differences. They have been affected by former industrial uses. PNE hosted the former general warehouses of Paris at the northern gateway of the city, industry related to train transportation, and the treatment of raw materials for energy. ANW saw the decline of the Dutch shipbuilding industry, Shell's oil treatment facilities, and the food, chemical, and seed industries. The Falck site hosted a major portion of Italy's steel manufacturing industry with related engine companies;
- c) have become a relatively recent object of policy making since the early 2000s, with political pressure increasing in the last year with the active engagement of governments;

- d) present planning processes that somehow cope with issues of historical heritage, functional mixes, multiple land usages, and that address the combination of residential spaces, productive spaces, and environment.

The study makes use of qualitative investigation techniques for a spatial-electoral approach. Most studies on the relationship between electoral dynamics and policy responsiveness have made use of qualitative techniques (Clack and Crebs 2012). The material has been collected through extensive fieldwork on-site, desk research (policy documents, newspapers, archives), and around 35 in-depth interviews per project with politicians, academics, and planners. Different forms of data have been used to address different sub-parts of the major question. Particular attention has been given to the role of politicians, the position of party agendas in shaping development, and to the historical ideological issues at stake on the areas of interest. Local civic groups have been a rich source of information on the political conflicts around the projects. Questions regarding the motivations behind particular land use and infrastructure planning choices enhanced understanding of the instrumental use of planning by political groups. These data have been cross-analyzed, looking at the debates taking place within the municipal council. Particular attention has been given to the different perceptions between officials in national (or higher levels in the case of Milan) tiers of government, core cities, and those in neighbor municipalities affected by the development. They were useful to understand the political tension of regional governance in the periphery. The qualitative data have been combined with the financial and economic prospects of projects in order to discover whether the programming has been affected by changed political conditions. Data on electoral turnout have been used to address this point when available. The research also looked at the financial construction of the interventions and land ownership to detect the long-short term profit expectations of both private and public actors involved.

The methodological limitations of a three case explanatory case study are consistent with all qualitative case studies. The external validity of the work is limited, as I do not attempt to confirm or falsify hypotheses deduced from consolidated theories but to inductively enrich existing ways of understanding the politics of planning. Yet, I attempted to increase the learning value of the research by adopting an approach to a problem that aims to elucidate causal mechanisms at play, and that compares cases of similar conditions. An intellectual compromise is necessary whenever political science research meets heuristic fields of study, like planning, that are strongly practice oriented. The electoral-spatial approach adopted in the chapters does explain electoral politics in their making, the processes of lobbying, influence, and conflict, over concrete issues of land use. Yet, I am aware of the limited external validity of the research. Internal validity has instead been increased by triangulation of data types, extensive interviews with different actors, and continuous interaction with colleagues and planners. Each case has moreover learned from the other in sequential manner, despite the basic structure of research remaining stable.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

The book addresses different sub-issues in each chapter. I recognize this structure as both the main strength and limit of the work. On the one hand, each chapter has a value in itself, each time presenting a fresh perspective on the major problem of peripheral development and electoral-political mechanisms. Each chapter shifts the point of analysis to shed light on one side of a complex problem. In doing so every chapter is a *single outcome study* (Gerring, 2006): it interrogates an outcome or a piece of evidence in planning practice in one context to elucidate the mechanisms that lead (or do not lead) to one specific project. The thesis is built on articles, submitted or already published in international peer-reviewed journals. Therefore, each article has an introduction and a conclusion.

Chapter 1, published in *Urban Studies*, addresses the role of the national government in enabling strategic projects. The article sheds light on the first, and perhaps most controversial, of the three variables explained above. It challenges the argument that national governments have lost the power to control local urban development. The chapter is based on the result of a pilot study I conducted in cooperation with the former Dutch Ministry of Spatial Planning, Environment and Housing affairs (VROM, today Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment), the major sponsor of this whole PhD project. The article investigates the logics of governmental action in strategic projects, focusing on what I call stimulation planning tools. It adopts a sociological-instrumental approach to identify new logics of involvement, namely endorsement, monetary impulse, propulsion, and effectuation. It concludes that the state is still active in local development, but it is more specialized and territorialized as a meta-governor of complex decision making processes. In doing so it manipulates processes to advance national agendas on strategic locations.

Chapter 2 presents an article published in *Environment and Planning A*. It focuses on the specific case of Paris, explaining the political dynamics that unexpectedly led to a cross-border project in the Northeast. Paris Nord-Est is the first case introduced, as an example of a progressive planning policy aiming at crossing jurisdictional and political boundaries between core city and periphery. The paper makes an explicit use of the conceptual bases of urban regime theory and provides an analysis of the way peripheral projects are instrumental to coalition building. The case concludes that cross-border development in Paris has been triggered by a series of geo-political changes: a stronger social-democratic leadership in Paris that is mobilized against consolidated right wing national coalitions, the alignment of the border community, and an instrumental mobilization of real estate investors seeking new yields from their outer land assets.

Chapter 3, currently under review, focuses on the case of the ex-Falck brownfield in the north of Milan. The paper is an experiment to adopt a spatial-electoral approach that is able to understand the effects of electoral calculations on land development. The paper develops a concept that is able to grasp the relationship between land use planning, the electoral dynamics of local political coalitions, and the indirect influence of metropolitan power dynamics. It builds upon the hypothesis that political gridlocks are generated by the power-holding behaviors of local coalitions in conditions of complex development. The latter tend towards a conservative behavior, protective of local constituencies. The paper further advances that this conservative behavior is strengthened and institutionalized under conditions of fragmented metropolitan governance. Political parochialism is not only a cause of metropolitan fragmentation but it may also be a consequence.

Chapter 4 is currently under review. It provides another perspective on the political-electoral dynamics of planning, making explicit the major dilemmas that political majorities need to address in peripheral development: intervention, investment, and regulation. They entail the strain between predicted intervention and spontaneous change, between the legal certainty of zoning and the particularism of self-regulation, and between supply and demand driven spatial investments. Focusing on the case of Amsterdam Zaan-IJ (also referred to as Amsterdam North-West), the paper discusses how these dilemmas emerge from political fractures around developmental strategies that are rooted in normative ideas of desirable land uses: the types of urban spaces to be produced, industrial functions to be settled, and the types of environmental policies to foster. The paper shows that these dilemmas do not require more or less planning, but a significant effort to address broad ideological visions and to align party agendas at local, regional, and national levels.

Chapter 5 is scheduled for a special issue of *Environment and Planning C*. In this chapter the reader will find all the major components of this thesis. The paper explains the triangle of urban power struggle for peripheral development. It hypothesizes that different power configurations depend on the specific electoral and economic arrangements between the three major powers, and that their misalignment hinders progressive planning practices. Looking at the three cases, the chapter concludes with an overview of the position that peripheral municipalities occupy in the geo-political process of planning. It inductively concludes by elaborating three types of peripheral development: *isolated*, *cross-border*, and *organic*. There are three major conclusions, which are also the major conclusions of the thesis: first, new urban patterns in the periphery of cities are not only an expression of shifting geographies of investment but also entail political and electoral calculations by public actors in power. This makes urban development in the periphery a potential locus for planning innovation, even in times of economic recession. Secondly, this paper suggests that peripheries can be spaces for wider experimentation, but this requires a planning approach that is able to link different levels of action with issues of land use planning. Third, this chapter suggests that in order to achieve progressive spatial development in city-regional planning it is important to shift focus from core-periphery to more symmetric geo-political frames.

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