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# Chapter 19

## Facilitating PSS Workshops: A Conceptual Framework and Findings from Interviews with Facilitators

Peter Pelzer, Robert Goodspeed and Marco te Brömmelstroet

**Abstract** Recent research has emphasized the importance of workshops as a venue where planning support systems (PSS) are used in planning processes. Empirical studies of these workshops have previously largely overlooked facilitation, in particular the role of a moderator (steering the discussion) and/or a chauffeur (steering the PSS). Drawing on existing facilitation research, we identify four main categories of facilitation interventions: substantive, procedural, relational, and tool-related. We use these categories to develop a novel conceptual framework for facilitation at PSS workshops. We test and develop this framework through semi-structured interviews with eight experienced facilitators of PSS workshops in the US and the Netherlands. The interviews confirm the validity of the intervention categories, but also revealed a wider range of PSS-specific workshop outcomes. We conclude that successful facilitation of PSS workshops requires two different types of facilitation interventions: some to encourage PSS use, and others to prevent PSS domination of the group discussion. Facilitating PSS workshops is mainly about finding the delicate and context-dependent balance between these two extremes.

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## 1 Introduction

It has almost become a cliché to emphasize the importance of collaboration in planning. A vast literature of empirical and theoretical contributions describes and prescribes the characteristics of collaborative planning (e.g. Forester 1989; Healey 1992; Innes and Booher 1999). Simultaneously, planning support systems (PSS) have been developed to support such collaborative planning processes with geo-information, modelling, visualization, or other functionality (e.g. Geertman 2006; Klosterman 1997).

We define PSS as “geoinformation technology-based instruments that incorporate a suite of components that collectively support some specific parts of a unique professional planning task” (Geertman 2008, p. 217). PSS, especially when they aim to support the more strategic phases of planning, are often applied in the context of a collaborative workshop setting, where they are used by groups of professionals or stakeholders engaged in a specific, delineated planning task (examples of this can be found in; Arciniegas and Janssen 2012; Goodspeed 2013; Pelzer et al. 2013; Te Brömmelstroet and Bertolini 2008; Shiffer 1992).

Researchers’ focus at these workshops is typically on the technical characteristics of the PSS (Geertman and Stillwell 2003; Geertman 2008). However, it has become clear that PSS technology is only one ingredient to successful PSS applications. Largely outside the view of the PSS literature, practitioners have developed techniques which utilize facilitation to skillfully integrate PSS into planning workshops (Huntsman 2004). Recent academic contributions emphasize the need to expand the research focus to a wider definition of PSS performance (Geertman and Stillwell 2009; Te Brömmelstroet 2013), or by analyzing the influence of process characteristics on project outcomes, such as the structure of the workshop and characteristics of workshop participants (e.g., Goodspeed 2013; Nyerges et al. 2006; Salter et al. 2006). These studies reinforce the importance of *knowledge exchange* (Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995) as a fundamental prerequisite for PSS usefulness. This perspective follows Shiffer (1992), who argues that collaborative planning requires a synthesis of information drawn from analytical tools, diverse media, and collective cognition found in group discussion. A central, but often overlooked, issue here is the fundamental importance of a moderator (steering the discussion) and/or a chauffeur (steering the PSS) in supporting this knowledge exchange among planning actors and the PSS during a workshop.

This chapter reports on an empirical study into the role of facilitation in PSS workshops. Its central research question is: what interventions lead to effective facilitation of PSS workshops? In Sect. 2, we draw on the scholarly literature on facilitation and PSS to develop a novel conceptual framework for facilitation of PSS workshops. The following sections describe our effort to validate and develop this framework through semi-structured interviews with experienced planning facilitators in the United States and the Netherlands. Section 3 describes our research methods, Sect. 4 presents the findings, and Sect. 5 concludes and discusses directions for future research.

## 2 Conceptual Framework

### 2.1 *Intended Outcomes of PSS Workshops*

Analysing effective facilitation at PSS workshops requires defining the intended workshop outcomes. Recent studies show that the specific intended outcomes of PSS workshops vary significantly from case to case (Brail 2008; Geertman et al. 2013; Geertman and Stillwell 2003, 2009; McElvaney 2012; Steinitz 2012). The desired outcomes depend on elements like cultural context, planning style, backgrounds of involved participants, the planning issue at hand, the phase of the planning process and the scale of the planning issue (Geertman 2006). For instance, a workshop with local residents to create a vision for their community has a very different aim than a workshop with professionals to refine a detailed proposal. Drawing on our own recent work (Goodspeed 2013; Pelzer 2015; Te Brömmelstroet 2013) we identify three important outcomes for PSS workshops: social learning among participants, a more integrated analysis, and a more informed planning product (be it a plan, project design, strategy, or vision). These three generic goals are operationalized below.

First, planning workshops can be seen as a venue for *social learning* by individuals, organizations, or society (Wenger 1998; Argyris and Schön 1996; Friedmann 1989). This concept has been operationalized in planning in different ways. For example, shifts in individual views and knowledge have been documented as one outcome of a collaborative planning process (Deyle and Slotterback 2009). In addition to this, Goodspeed (2013) measured self-reported individual learning, as well as dimensions of organizational learning drawn from Argyris and Schön's (1996) double-loop learning model: evidence seeking, valid information, free and informed choice, and internal commitment to choice. However, Gudmundsson (2011) reminds us that a PSS may have uses beyond learning. He argues that knowledge technologies like PSS can not only be used instrumentally (to provide direct insight into a problem) but can also be used in symbolic ways (to make policymaking seem scientific and thorough), or to provide broad conceptual enlightenment (provide broader insights).

Second, PSS can help achieve a *more integrated analysis* of the planning issue at hand. We define an integrated analysis as one which systematically considers all relevant dimensions of a particular planning problem. While the shift towards more communicative approaches to planning has reduced the emphasis on the quality and nature of analysis (Geertman 2006; Klosterman 1997), PSS can arguably serve as a link between different types of information that are brought to the workshop table by planning participants. Many PSS can also offer the potential for integrating design and analysis, by facilitating the rapid analysis of proposals. For example, planning for sustainability requires analysing a complex variety of environmental, social and economic factors (e.g. Pelzer et al. 2013).

Third, the last potential outcome of PSS workshops is *a more informed product*. Klosterman remarks that "the development of PSS can be seen as part of a larger effort to return the planning profession to its traditional concern with using

information and analysis to more effectively engage the future” (2009, p. iv; see also Couclelis 2005; Hopkins and Zapata 2007). This resonates with Hopkins’s (2001; see Pelzer et al. 2014) work on the effectiveness of plans. He argues that, among other things, the internal consistency of plans should be scrutinized. In addition to plans, PSS workshops may lead to other types of products, such as a project design, strategy, or vision.

We acknowledge that organizers and participants of PSS workshops may pursue a variety of additional process and outcome goals. These might include the development of consensus and commitment on the part of participants, as well as the production of plans with novelty and specificity. The three generic aims outlined above, however, have arguably emerged in the PSS literature as particularly important.

## 2.2 *Facilitation Interventions*

Group facilitation is both the topic of practical guides (e.g., Schwarz 1994; Kolb 2011) and scholarly literature (e.g., Frey 1995; Kolfshoten and Rouwette 2006). Facilitation as a field of practice and research emerged from earlier research on group dynamics (e.g., Fisher and Ellis 1980; Poole and Hollingshead 2005). Early studies showed that group performance depends not only on how well tasks are completed by group members, but also on the quantity and quality of relationships within the group (Bales 1950). The facilitation literature identifies “group performance” (Hirokawa and Gouran 1989) or “effectiveness” (Schwarz 2002) as key group outcomes, and are measured as brainstorming creativity, group problem solving ability, and group decision quality. The communication and facilitation groups require for high performance varies considerably by task. For example, Hirokawa and Gouran (1989) observed that simple tasks can be facilitated with centralized and restricted communication patterns where group member contributions are channeled through a strong facilitator who serves to coordinate group communication. Conversely, this study showed that more complex tasks benefited when communication took the form of a decentralized network, with greater face-to-face communication among group members and less active involvement of a facilitator.

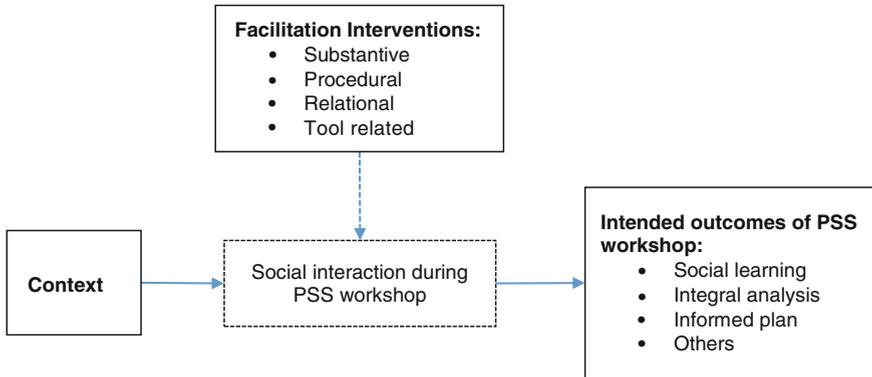
In the management literature, the role of facilitation is to maximize the relevant goals of a specific meeting. Good facilitation involves general *behaviours*, specific *interventions*, and *roles* that together seek to maximize process gains and minimize process losses (Hayne 1999). An example of a process gain is additional insight produced by group feedback, and a process loss might be good ideas which are ignored by the group or not recorded. Hirokawa and Gouran (1989) divide activities of facilitators into three areas: *substantive*, or related to topics discussed, *procedural*, or drawing attention to process elements like the agenda, and *relational*, or attending to social or emotional issues.

Although there is no scholarly literature specifically on the role of facilitation in PSS workshops, researchers have examined the role of facilitation in two similar settings: group support systems (GSS) and group use of systems dynamics computer models. These literatures provide additional issues that may apply to PSS workshops too. In a study based on participants' perceptions, de Vreede et al. (2002) propose several unique roles for facilitators at meetings using GSS: technical GSS knowledge, provide an introduction and explanation of the GSS technology, and provide a warm-up to introduce the technology. Similarly, interviews with GSS facilitators found that knowledge of the tool was a critical factor for meeting success, and that several issues related to technology could be barriers to successful meetings: participant anxiety, systems inflexibility, low reliability, technology distraction, and the technology learning curve (Niedermaier et al. 1996). Building on the existing facilitation literature, Khalifa et al. (2002) found mixed results between facilitation choices and GSS-supported learning outcomes. This study considered the role of two types of facilitation interventions: *procedural* interventions that impose process restrictiveness, i.e., ensure a group is following an agenda, and *substantive* interventions that encourage content restrictiveness, or ensuring focus remains on the assigned topics. In this experiment, although the relationship between content restrictiveness and learning was unclear, they found some evidence that high process restrictiveness reduced student knowledge acquisition.

Researchers working in the area of system dynamics modelling have arrived at similar conclusions. Vennix (1999) identified several types of facilitation skills as important for workshops: process structuring, conflict handling, and communication skills. He argues that system dynamics model building must be "skilfully combined with adequate facilitation" in order for the projects to result in group learning (Vennix 1999, p. 392). Since PSS workshops are similar sociotechnical contexts to these, we anticipate the need for facilitators to engage in PSS-specific interventions. We focus particularly on these tool-related interventions as they are a very relevant topic for both academics and practitioners involved in PSS applications that has thus far received little scholarly attention.

### 2.3 Conceptual Framework

For the purpose of this chapter, we have simplified the abovementioned debate in Fig. 19.1. In this figure, we define a category of dependent variables (intended outcomes of PSS workshop), which is influenced by an important confounding variable (social interaction during the PSS workshop), the latter is influenced by both context and facilitation interventions. The structure is also informed by earlier interviews of professionals about PSS by one of the authors in the Netherlands, and observations from intensive study of PSS workshops in the United States by another author. We capture as context a range of explanatory variables for a successful PSS workshop, including usability of the instrument, the physical space and the audience. Next, the facilitation interventions aim to influence social interaction



**Fig. 19.1** Conceptual framework of chapter

during a workshop, and contribute to certain intended workshop outcomes. The remainder of this chapter draws on our empirical investigation to further explore, refine and illustrate this conceptual framework.

### 3 Methodology

Our aim is to investigate the nature and effectiveness of facilitation interventions at PSS workshops. Since this is a research topic that has to our knowledge not been explored before and requires in-depth practitioner insights, we adopted a research design featuring key informant interviews among a purposeful selection of practitioners with diverse PSS workshop experience. We relied on the relatively easy access of our own national contexts, which gave the additional advantage that we could compare the two contexts and could draw on our knowledge of the planning cultures and popular PSS in each country. We interviewed eight experienced facilitators of PSS workshops, five from the United States and three from the Netherlands.<sup>1</sup> All eight had participated in multiple PSS workshops, ranging from four workshops within one planning project, to over 50 workshops across many diverse projects.

The workshops described by informants took different forms. In addition to the portions dedicated to PSS use, the events typically combined multiple elements within one meeting, such as slide presentations, display boards, small group discussions, and brainstorming exercises. The specific PSS mentioned were Urban Strategy, Phoenix, CommunityViz, Envision Tomorrow+, as well as non-domain specific tools like Google Earth. Figures 19.2 and 19.3 show pictures taken during

<sup>1</sup>We do not mention the names of our interviewees to allow them to reflect freely on their experiences.



**Fig. 19.2** A PSS-supported workshop in Lockhart, Texas (*Source* Robert Goodspeed)



**Fig. 19.3** A workshop supported with the PSS Urban Strategy in Utrecht, the Netherlands (*Source* Stan Geertman)

two workshops where the informants served as facilitators. At these events, the PSS were used in diverse ways:

- Two informants had experience at PSS workshops where participants entered land use plans on a paper map, which were digitized on laptops by PSS operators in order to calculate indicators;
- One informant is a specialist in using MapTable, a large touch-sensitive computer monitor (touch table), which allows a small group to simultaneously view and manipulate a computer model;
- One informant described meetings where a PSS is projected from above onto a table, and participants interact with the model through a light pen;
- One informant is a specialist in using dedicated user-friendly drawing software, which is often applied in combination with a touch table;
- Finally, three informants had experience with workshops where groups viewed PSS outputs on computer monitors.

Our semi-structured interviews followed the main variable categories in the conceptual framework. In order to minimize bias, although two authors conducted almost all of the interviews together, a Dutch author asked questions during the interviews of Americans, and an American author asked the questions with the Dutch professionals. Below, we briefly discuss differences we observed between the two countries. The interviews were conducted by phone or online videoconferencing. One interview was conducted in person by only one interviewer. The transcripts were divided among two authors for coding. In the coding process, the four types of intervention were identified. Relevant quotes were assigned to one of the four categories and then given an inductive detailed code. If quotes overlapped with existing codes, they were attributed to the similar code, which was then sometimes slightly modified to encompass multiple quotes.

## **4 Findings**

### ***4.1 Overview of Interventions***

A full overview of the resulting codes and corresponding quotes is reported in Appendix 1. Unlike the substantive interventions, most procedural and relational interventions that were mentioned by the facilitators are arguably not specific to planning or PSS workshops, but relevant to any group meeting. With regards to procedural interventions, the most common was time keeping, an unsurprising but necessary dimension of facilitation. Moreover, we found the substantive interventions fell into a varied set of codes. For instance, ensuring the ideas that are proposed are feasible was described this way:

If somebody puts a park in an area where that park couldn't go for whatever reason, [...] (the facilitators) might say: 'That place isn't eligible for this and they would explain why it is not eligible. And then they could parlay that into kind of a discussion, why might that not be there?'

On the other hand, substantive interventions also involve ensuring the workshop stays focused in a broader sense: *"You have to draw out commonalities (...) make sure people don't jump ahead."*

A key set of relational interventions refer to handling difficult or dominant people. A starting point for almost all facilitators is that difficult or dominant people should be listened to and treated with respect, but not allowed to take over the workshop, prevent others from speaking, or prevent the group from working. To deal with these people, a facilitator has various interventions at his or her disposal, for instance, one strategy is to document the complaints: *"If somebody is angry, you try to write down or to make notes on the screen, [so] that he sees that you take him seriously. If he is aggressive, let him draw or type in himself what are the remarks he has, and you even print it out. They are all tools to create confidence and to create trust."* Another way to address this issue is to proactively create a structure for the workshop that ensures all participants are heard: *"[we apply] Round-Robin techniques [that] prevent one person to dominate the conversation. There are two pens we would be using, and we would change these pens on a regular interval, so people won't feel we're picking on them."* In addition, we coded several interventions that are particularly aimed at ensuring a positive atmosphere. As one facilitator notes: *"I use humor purposely as a device to kind of get the room loosened up. You gotta get folks relaxed."*

Among the tool-related interventions, there is a clear consensus among the facilitators that PSS should not take over the workshops. Several facilitators described their goal was to ensure the PSS is used only in certain ways and times. One facilitator states that: *"You don't want the tool to become the center of attention. (...) I tell people over and over again, this is one arrow in the quiver."* Another facilitator adds that: *"(we decided) to keep the digitizer role a little more discrete (...) we wanted to prioritize the conversation that people were having around the table [a MapTable] with one another (...) we didn't want the software aspect to have a negative impact on the conversation."* However, in other instances, facilitators emphasize interventions aimed at increasing the use of the PSS. For instance, a facilitator remarks: *"The facilitator might push the group in a direction the facilitator wants to work in. If I want a group to work with [a PSS], I ask them questions which can only be answered by working with [the PSS]."* Another facilitator remarks that the best way for effectively using the tool is to involve the participants in defining the assumptions used by the PSS. *"So I say, folks, you got to help me get this thing [the PSS] ready. (...) We call that user-defined parameters, UDPs."* Tool involvement can also take a different form, by giving people time to get accustomed to the PSS: *"The first ten minutes, you have to get people involved. For instance, they want to see their house on the map, and generally we tend to allow that, because it gets people interested and involved, puts them in the right*

*mood, and puts the map central (...) They get more convinced in working around the table [a MapTable]."*

We also inductively coded reactive interventions, which were used if workshop participants question a PSS. For instance, when someone is critical about whether the PSS actually contributes to the planning process: *"The only way to deal with them is to have a quite flawless workshop. (...) I would counter them not by explaining the instrument, but trying to get their attention away from the instrument, try to get their attention to the actual problem they have. Trying to get a dialogue about their problem and their challenges. Letting the instrument be for a while."*

Finally, some of the tool-related interventions are closely related to the substantive interventions. For instance, by drawing attention to information contained in the PSS: *"They [facilitators] might need to remind people about a data point that was brought up. (...) Facilitators sometimes need to say 'Hold on one second: is that the data that was just presented.' Continue to ground the conversation in the data that was presented."*

Our binational research design also allows us to tentatively explore differences in PSS facilitation between two planning cultures. Although the variation among the cases is arguably larger than between the two countries, in general, Dutch facilitators described projects with greater participation by government officials and with larger budgets for more technically complex PSS than the American ones. American facilitators described the challenges of using PSS at workshops attended by activists concerned about property rights, which reflects more skeptical attitudes of government authority in U.S. political culture. The hardware also differed between the two countries—MapTables were only used in the Netherlands, and projectors and light pens were used only in the United States. However we did not find evidence these technical differences affected the facilitation or overall workshop dynamics, since both allow for very similar group interactions with the PSS. Despite these differences, the distribution of interventions across our four categories for each country was roughly similar. The most commonly raised interventions, *handling dominant or difficult people* and *prevent tool domination* were top concerns by facilitators in both countries.

## **4.2 Interventions and Outcomes**

Finally, we asked our informants about the relationship between the interventions and what they perceived to be the main goals of the workshops. First, we are very aware that we need to be sensitive to the diverse nature and aims of workshops. Several informants explicitly identified different types of workshops with various outcomes, discussing how facilitation would differ for each workshop. For example, one facilitator mentioned three types: workshops for communicating a design or proposal (for a new highway, for example), workshops focusing on brainstorming and collecting opinions, and workshops for "drawing and calculating" where proposals are sketched

and analyzed. Another facilitator described how learning was a necessary stage for all planning projects before group problem-solving could take place.

A second reflection is that several of the substantive and relational interventions were related to planning-specific tasks, such as selecting feasible options, thinking spatially, and drawing on local knowledge. Although all informants stressed the importance of involving all participants in the workshop, they did advocate substantive interventions to move discussions forward. The interventions *feasibility*, *strategic guidance*, and *synthesize* involve providing selected expert opinions on the topics being discussed. Furthermore, *aid with spatial thinking* and *thinking big* are interventions that involve assistance on two types of thinking that participants may not be as well versed in, but are required for planning. One informant stressed the importance of substantive knowledge in establishing credibility among participants: “*The first thing I do when I fly in is to buy a local newspaper. I try to work it into the content of the workshop. (...) If I’m able to say: does that proposal for that new shopping center south of town makes sense in this respect? (They think) God, he knows what’s going on.*” While the informants reported a range of substantive interventions, they also reported interventions aimed at focusing attention on the PSS, when it was appropriate for the discussion.

The tool-related interventions that were mentioned contributed in various ways to the objectives we identified: learning, integrated analysis, and informed products. Many of these were aimed at ensuring participants understood and used the PSS when appropriate: *steer towards tool*, *prevent tool domination*, *connect to data*, and *guide tool use*. One informant stressed the difficulty of participants to digest all information that was presented, and argued facilitators played a key role in reminding participants of the structure of the PSS so that they could understand how to use it: “*(the facilitators) helped them understand what the different categories were that we were playing with. (...) I think that was important for this particular workshop: (remind them) what is the computer actually recording?*”

Several facilitators also mentioned a range of interventions aimed at additional outcomes beyond integrated analysis and informed products. These include both broader learning outcomes, as well as other outcomes not specified in our framework. For example, *avoiding tool domination* was motivated by a desire to ensure sufficient time for other outcomes, such as mutual learning about competing values among participants. One facilitator argued that the PSS helped to make the workshop “fun” and provide a “sense of accomplishment,” both of which she felt were important to ensure ongoing engagement in the project, and therefore for the overall project success.

While many PSS interventions were aimed at learning, integrated analysis, and an informed product, we also identified substantive and relational interventions aimed at a range of other outcomes. Perhaps most surprisingly, as described above, achieving workshop objectives often required explaining the PSS, encouraging participants to use it, but also preventing it from dominating the meeting or distracting from the substantive issues.

## 5 Conclusions and Further Research

The central question in this chapter was: What interventions lead to effective facilitation of PSS workshops? Our preliminary empirical analysis with a relatively small number of experienced facilitators from the Netherlands and the United States, allows us to discern some tentative patterns. First, procedural interventions were mentioned less frequently than other types of interventions, although this could also be explained because these interventions are taken for granted by the facilitators. Several facilitators mentioned the importance of physical conditions for a good PSS workshop, including good Internet connectivity, well-functioning air-conditioning, working shades and lighting controls, etc. We consider these important aspects of the context for successful PSS workshops. Second, we found that the category of tool-related interventions consists of a combination of relational and substantive interventions, resulting, however, in distinct interventions. On the one hand, facilitators point out that the tool should not dominate the workshop and suppress discussion (a relational consideration), whereas on the other hand, participants are encouraged to grasp the underlying ideas of the PSS and often as a consequence the spatial phenomena at hand (a substantive consideration). Combining these two kinds of interventions in one workshop is a fine balancing act. Based on the interviews, it seems, however, critical in order to come to effective facilitation of PSS workshops.

The main added values resulting from our empirical material for the wider PSS debate are two main sets of tool-related facilitation interventions. First, we found interventions aiming to restrict the role of PSS or apply it selectively, indicating that there is a tendency in PSS workshops to put the tool too much on the forefront, and second, we document interventions to improve the usage of the tool, for instance by involving the participants in setting the indicators or by steering questions towards using the tool. These two clusters might be counterintuitive, but strongly relate to each other. Therefore, the act of facilitation is to find a fine balance between using a PSS to little versus using it too much. This requires a delicate mix of interventions. In addition, facilitating is strongly context-dependent. A workshop with local residents requires a very different way of steering PSS use than a setting with planning practitioners with extensive knowledge of the PSS at hand. Which interventions are needed depend not only on workshop goals, but also on the nature of the PSS, the participants, and the particular discussion they have.

The findings in this chapter are related to two issues we will mention that extend beyond our focus here on workshops: participant involvement in designing PSS, and the negative effects of tools like PSS. Previous researchers have argued for the importance of participant involvement in creating or tailoring PSS tools, using terms like mediated modelling, group model building and mediated planning support (e.g. Van den Belt 2004, Te Brömmelstroet 2010; Vennix 1999). Hence, PSS involvement seems to offer a context-sensitive facilitation intervention that, when applied carefully, can have a positive effect in different kinds of PSS workshops. However, this issue extends beyond the boundaries of the workshop to

encompass contextual factors related to the planning process. In relation to the second important observation—that PSS should not dominate workshops—recent studies point at the potentially negative effects a technology like PSS can have when dominating planning and policy making. It can for instance hamper communication (Pelzer 2014) or guide and limit the content of a workshop, something referred to as performativity (Smith et al. 2013). Whereas it is widely acknowledged that PSS should connect to the collaborative and communicative nature of planning (e.g. Klosterman 1997, Geertman 2006), this chapter adds a cautionary note: successful collaboration at workshops requires facilitation to ensure effective PSS use.

This chapter follows two trends in PSS research we believe holds much promise for future research: first, learning from professional practice to generate new theoretical insights, and second, a focus on the importance of details of planning workshops in explaining process outcomes. Specifically focusing on facilitation, informants' experiences suggests additional research could probe the relationship between the broader aims of workshops (e.g. learning), the right conditions in a workshop (e.g. open communication), and the type of planning interventions that could facilitate this (e.g. tool involvement).

Our methodological choice to focus on gathering empirical insights through eight semi-structured interviews raises a number of important limitations on the validity of the findings. Future research using a large-N research design could therefore strengthen the external validity of our findings. This would add even more validity by extending it into different planning cultures and workshop types. We also strongly believe that a more rigorous hypothesis-testing research design (i.e. through case studies, observations, or controlled experiments) could strengthen the internal validity of understanding how facilitation interventions influence PSS workshop outcomes.

This chapter attempted to put facilitation more firmly on the agenda of the PSS debate. We believe this discussion is as relevant for practice as it is for academia, since, as one of the interviewees puts it, workshops can be “*spoiled by a lousy facilitator*”.

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