

STRATEGIC SPATIAL THINKING AND CHANGE.

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Abstract

Strategic thinking is useful for drawing up plans or programs designed for achieving future goals and using available resources. Developing a strategy enables the design of approaches that will help meet future challenges. The mission and objectives must be defined, the advantages and drawbacks of each line of action analysed, and each option assessed in terms of strategy.

In order to follow a single guiding principle, it is important to stop and think that strategic management is ultimately a model of change. It is not simply a question of moving, but where we are moving. Here, strategic thinking plays a vital role. We must move rapidly and foresee the future in order to conquer it. Strategic planning is a set of steps and stages that we accomplish, using instruments and models to bring about, consolidate and standardize strategic thinking.

Keywords: *strategic thinking, spatial, change*

1. INTRODUCTION

Many elements and circumstances changed rapidly at the beginning of the XXIst century. Changes occurred in all walks of economic, political and social life that could not go unnoticed (Cunningham, 2011).

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The mission and objectives must be defined, the advantages and drawbacks of each line of action analysed, and each option assessed in terms of strategy (Prahalad and Hammel, 2000).

For these reasons, it is essential to change when we are ahead, not when we are plunged into a deep insurmountable crisis which has no magic solution. The perception of change and its skilful guidance is an absolute imperative of management, and introducing it successfully is one of the greatest challenges. Change is the relationship between past and future and is completely normal. However, it is something we are unable to assimilate and often openly reject. It follows that change requires a period of transition that must not be eluded, depending

ultimately on how well people are prepared, to what extent they can adapt to change (Hulme, 2009).

Change is not the same as a transition. Change is situational: the new post, the new system, the new policy. The transition is the psychological process that people undergo to adapt to a new situation (González Úbeda, 2004). Change is external, whereas transition is internal. Unless there is a transition, change will not be successful.

This way of thinking about strategic plan-making, as a social process rather than a technical exercise, seeks to interrelate the active work of individuals within social processes (the level of agency) with the power of systemic forces, economic organization, political organization, social dynamics and natural forces (the level of the structuring of social relations). It recognizes that strategic spatial plan-making, although occurring within a context of powerful structuring forces, may be used by social groups to create structures and frameworks through which the various actors are involved, and on the capacity of the actors, in interaction, to use spatial strategy-making to shape the flow of regulation and development investment in their locality (Healey et al, 2013).

2. STRATEGIC THINKING AND NEW ANSWERS TO SPATIAL CHALLENGES

Strategic thinking must be based on as clear a diagnosis as possible, taking into account the environment and existing barriers to devise a strategy that will envision the desired future.

Therefore, it is essential to achieve a strategic orientation that the city or organization as a whole will join voluntarily and enthusiastically and without which, strategic planning cannot be put into practice.

Strategic action is not possible without strategic thinking (Harrison and John, 2002). One of the most frequent errors when starting the process of strategic management is trying to achieve objectives first and then plan actions that are not based on true strategic thinking, thus giving way to formalism and following a “strategic plan” that was not the result of strategic thinking.

The process of strategic planning stipulates preparation and anticipation to reach an ideal but possible state, therefore how the change takes place is decisive for encouraging or attenuating the human factor. Some years ago, coercive change strategies were used, by which an authority pressurized collective behaviour, ordering it to be changed. Nowadays, the concept of participatory change has been introduced, based on new knowledge that stimulates and develops the right attitude and shapes the individual's behaviour via participation in setting goals and challenges leading to collective commitment (Wannapa and Supol, 2012).

However, profound long-lasting changes are not possible if paradigms such as the standards, mind maps or models with which we perceive the world we live in is not transformed. On the one hand, we have the real world and on the other, the world of our ideas, a subjective perception of the objective world and very often we do not see it as it really is. These interpretations define how we behave. Only when we transform our convictions and mind maps can we change systems, as real attitudes and behaviour are a true reflection of these paradigms (Jasanoff, 2010).

2.1. Strategic thinking and change

Generally, paradigms have the following characteristics: They are common, they act as filters, they are useful for solving problems, within a limit, and they block perception. They give meaning and coherence to our experiences. If we are unable to change paradigms, we cannot correct what is not functioning well.

One of the greatest causes of conflict occurs between old inherited paradigms of management based on hierarchical authority and the new highly democratic self-directed model based on collaborative teamwork, which motivates people to improve themselves (Mintzberg and Brian, 1997). Conflicts and polemic situations are considerably more frequent when executives give the impression that they are running their enterprises in a participatory way without changing their paradigms. The life cycle of organizational trends is becoming shorter, and only those who cope with them successfully will prosper (Garrido Buj, 2006).

Other organizational changes that must be addressed are:

- From management based on instructions to management based on objectives and even values.
- From an organization based on authoritarianism to one in which leadership is given primacy.
- From bossy managers to enabling managers.
- From concentrating decision-making at the top of the organization or city to taking the client or citizen into account, on the basis of decentralization.
- Everyone is included in thinking and planning, not only managers.
- From secretism to communication and empathy.
- From strict control to self-control.
- From assessment of effort and reliability to assessment of results.

Organizations or cities must change from one set of paradigms to another more in accordance with the current environment:

THE OLD PARADIGM Mid XXth century	THE NEW PARADIGM Beginning of the XXIst century
Technology first.	Sociotechnical systems.
People as a prolongation of machines.	Priority is given to the human factor.
People as spare parts.	People as the main aspect.
Limited tasks.	Wide-ranging tasks.
Simple tasks.	Multiple skills.
External control.	Self-control.
Many levels.	Flat organizations or cities.
Autocratic style.	Participative style.
Competitive organization.	Cooperative organization.
Proposals made by the organization.	Proposals made by both individuals and the organization.
Alignment.	Commitment.
“It’s just a job”.	“It’s my job”.
Assuming few risks.	Innovating, assuming risks.

The differences between old and new paradigms are perfectly clear. The importance of managing human development is underlined in changes that have occurred in all aspects of life including the financial, political and social spheres. The result of effective management in this sense is that employees are better trained and new social values are assumed (Chiavenato, 2003).

Problems currently facing organizations, cities and businesses in this respect (stress, fatigue, monotony, lack of interest, complaints, no enthusiasm and so on) are an unending consequence of poor quality management and have an adverse effect on motivation and commitment. It is clear that the most successful companies take people into account, and their management teams relate to their employees, suppliers, clients and others (Mintberg, 2007).

Apart from the mentioned aspects considered to be essential in change processes, such as participation, commitment, and communication, great perseverance is also required. This means having limitless patience and a great desire to finally achieve what is desired. For these reasons it can be said that people are willing to accept change in an organization or city if:

- They are asked to contribute knowledge, attitudes, suggestions, feelings and opinions about the change. This stimulates creativity in a free and unceremonious atmosphere.
- They are informed of the reasons for the change and the benefits it will bring.
- They receive systematic specific information on the change.
- Their feelings are respected, whether they are for or against the change.
- Their help is requested to deal with the effect of change on employment.
- Their contribution to making the change happen is properly acknowledged.

These aspects create and foment an atmosphere of trust amongst all members of the organization or city. It is essential to understand that all people in organizations or cities undergo a number of transformations that can be classified into stages when the change process is actually underway (Kotler, 2003), as seen in the following table.

STAGE	FEELINGS	PERCEPTION	EMOTIONS	STRUCTURES
Impact	Their knowledge is being threatened	Dejection	Panic Powerlessness	Confusion
Defence withdrawn	Clinging to old ways	Prevention Anxiety	Indifference Anger Euphoria	Defence
Admission	Abandoning old ways	Facing up to the new situation	Depression Bitterness	Reorganization
Adjustment	New self-evaluation	Verifying the new situation	Growing satisfaction	Reconstruction

It should be pointed out that each person in the organization or city, in accordance with their characteristics, personality, and values, are affected more or less by these

stages. One stage can be traumatic for some and go unnoticed for others. It is important to try to understand each person or citizen in this complex process of internal transition, as they can make a considerable contribution to it.

2.2. Strategic thinking and Statistical Analysis

As previously stated, strategic thinking must be based on a clear diagnosis of the environment, based on its main characteristics. The information available for decision making exploited in recent years, and will continue to do so in the future. In the “information society”, there are many data available related to all aspects of the environment: Economy, Society, Demography, and so. There is no lack of information, but there is a dearth of knowledge. According to Dyson (2011), it is well known that “Information is cheap, but the meaning is expensive”.

Because Information is not equivalent to Meaning, a Statistical Analysis of the available data must be done in order to create meaningful information (knowledge). Figure 1 shows the process:



Figure 1. Strategic thinking and Statistical Analysis

Although the objectives of research and emphasis on interpretation may vary, the researcher within either area must take all issues, both conceptual and empirical, into consideration to select the most accurate statistical methods to be applied (Dyson, 2012). Some kind of information can be analysed and understood with simple statistics, but much of it requires more complex statistical methods: for instance, the multivariate analysis techniques. Multivariate analysis refers to all statistical techniques that simultaneously analyse multiple measures on individuals or objects under investigation and the relationships among them. These methods are becoming popular because they enable organizations to create knowledge and thereby improve their decision-making (Hair, et al 2014:4).

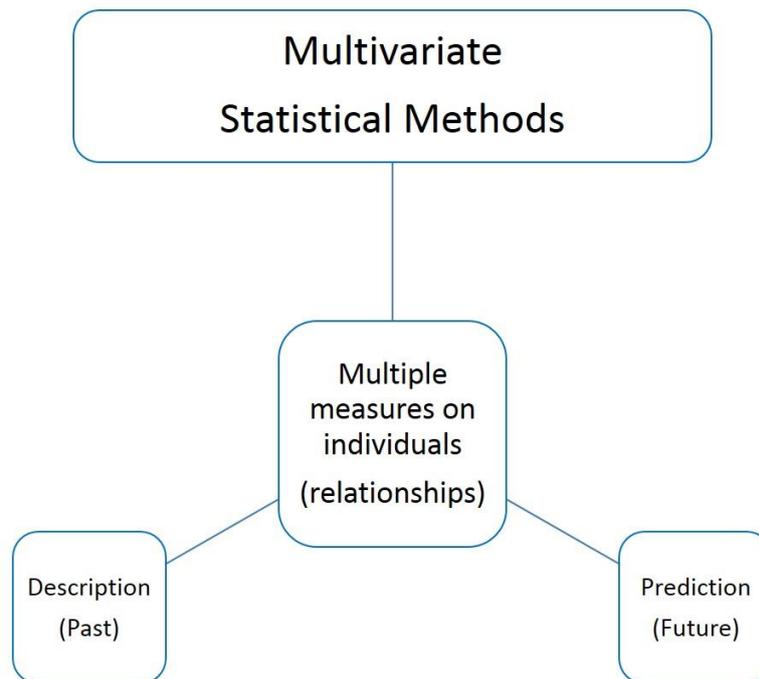


Figure 2. Multivariate Statistical Methods

Many multivariate methods are extensions of univariate and bivariate statistical analysis: for example, simple regression (with one predictor variable) is extended in the multivariate case to include several predictor variables. Likewise, the single dependent variable found in the analysis of variance. Some multivariate techniques provide means of performing a single analysis what once took multiple univariate analyses to accomplish. Other multivariate methods, however, are uniquely designed to deal with multivariate issues, such as factor analysis, which identifies the structure underlying a set of variables; or discriminant analysis, which differentiates among groups based on a set of variables (Hair, et al. 2014:5).

As figure 2 shows, Multivariate Statistical Methods can link past and future. Firstly, a descriptive analysis of the available data is applied in order to know the past. The results should be carefully interpreted. Afterward, the management of this knowledge allows the future to be predicted.

The described process can contribute to a better assimilation of change, the transition period could be reduced and people can be better prepared to adapt, to change. So, not only can Statistical Analysis provide a better diagnosis of the environment, it is also becoming essential for strategic thinking, and therefore, for strategic action (González, 2011, 2014).

3. THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

Different change models, which one way or another have been addressed in these times, are used to bring about changes in organizations or cities. They include:

- Management based on objectives and results.
- Organizational development.
- Programmes for improving performance.
- Total quality.
- Re-engineering.
- Benchmarking.
- 7 “S” model.

Due to its validity and usefulness in interpreting very important aspects related to change and strategic planning, we will discuss the 7 “S” model. The so-called 7 “S” are elements inherent to the work of an organization or city which, when interconnected, give a sense of integration to the organization (Ivancevich, Lorenzi, Skinner and Crosby, 1997). Each “S” stands for the following:

Structure. This is the design of an organization, which differentiates essential functions or processes from business, at the same time integrating and coordinating functions, and this enables the entity to work as a whole. The structure of the organization comprises:

- The fundamental grouping together of greater processes associated with functions, information, and clients.
- Operational identification of the coordination of the necessary mechanisms for ensuring the effectiveness of strategic objectives.

The structure of an organization is directly proportional to the organizational elements of a company or entity. It involves dividing tasks into work activities, delegating authority, assigning resources, prioritizing aspects and deciding the quantity and quality of posts in each department or area. Designing and implementing a functional structure for the future which is committed to quality and overcomes the most complex challenges that successful management faces today (Ortiz, 2003). The structure of the organization is the network, layout, and location of workplaces and guides the conduct of people and groups towards carrying out the aims of the organization.

Skills. Critical attributes and distinctive competences. The competences include:

- The capacity is given to a company by its competitive strength.
- The necessary capacities for acting or supporting new forms of behaviour to achieve strategic goals.
- Maintaining the essential capacity that enables an organization to remain in good standing whatever the circumstances.

Strategy. The road, the route, the secret to being a successful competitor. The strategy defines:

- The mission of the business or city.
- The plan for realizing the competitive advantage.

- Reinforcing the resources that will increase or maintain the competitive advantage and increase the chances of success.
- Roles, proposals, and actions planned ahead to account for changes in the organization's environment, and its clients and competitors.
- Identification and profile of the competitors.
- Identification of the critical functions that must be carried out efficiently to achieve goals (Clarke and Fuller, 2011).
- Identification of the Critical Success Factors (CSF).
- Measuring the key to determining the success of the strategy.

Shared Values. Profoundly credible guiding values and principles that give the entity a unique particular strength of character and identity. They provide:

- Sense and direction for people.
- An essential identity that enables the organization to respond to changes in its environment.
- Foundations that act as a guide in decision-making.
- Criteria for developing the other "S".
- Central ideas on which to build the business.

Staff. The design of criteria to maintain the health and vitality of the human factor, and the development of the management team. Characteristics of staff in an organization include:

- The capacity of the Management team includes the process of acquiring, socializing and developing the desired Management resources.
- The processes used to perpetuate the identity and strengths of the organization in time by carrying out continuous assessment and developing the leadership and talent of the management team.

System. Mechanisms that enable all business processes. The systems include:

- Management processes by which an executive multiplies and extends his intentions throughout the organization via others.
- Linking processes that coordinate functional elements.
- Processes, policies, procedures, and practices by which work is or is not carried out.
- Definition of expectations.
- Measuring performance or progress.

Style. The observable character of the senior management team and its interactions with organizations. Style is identified as:

- The observed model of behaviour.
- Actions that show a collective commitment to guarantee principles and values.

The conception of the 7 "S" model offers us the following:

- A useful tool for influencing or changing people's behaviour.
- Direct access to key interdependent variables which, together, characterize the organization and how they operate.
- An integrated approach for leading and steering the process of change.
- A philosophy that will enable the necessary transformations for a better future to be foreseen.

This model meets two basic objectives. Firstly, it is a mechanism, which, when well-oiled, helps us to understand how an organization or city works properly (Raupp and Hoffjann, 2012). Each “s” can be used as a starting point for evaluating management or planning processes, procedures, assumptions and other effects that determine the performance of an organization. Secondly, it provides direct access to necessary changes in behaviour and the performance of the members of an organization or cities.

4. PARTICIPATION IN THE STRATEGIC CHANGE PROCESS

The role of the management team or mayors is crucial in the change model and therefore cannot be left in the hands of outsiders. So far, we may seem convinced of the unquestionable need for change, as can be seen in our paradigms, management methods and styles, by placing human beings at the centre of the company or institution (Pina, Torres and Yetano, 2011). However, we should ask ourselves the following questions:

- When and how do we design these changes?
- How do we incite the changes?
- How do we bring them about?
- How can we implement the changes in a less traumatic way?

Change is more acceptable when:

- It can be understood.
- It is not a threat to safety.
- Those involved contribute to carrying it out.
- It is the result of impersonal principles.
- Previous changes have been successful.
- Previous changes have been assimilated.
- Training has been carried out in the organization or institution.
- The benefits are shared.
- It has been planned properly.

We can say that a strategy is required for making effective changes (Leichenko and O’Brien 2008). When changes are taking place, people and groups need to develop a sense of belonging and ownership, and take an active part in their planning otherwise, there will only be a passive agreement. The following is a description of some ways of promoting successful changes in organizations or institutions (Perez and Massoni, 2009), changes that will become a habit:

- Effective communication, that is, communication must exist before, during and after the changes by distributing reports or descriptions of the changes, with clear guidance and goals to be achieved (Raupp and Hoffjann, 2012).
- Involving staff and stimulating participation as this will make the changes more effective.
- People need time to adapt to the new way of doing things and to detach themselves from the past.
- Incorporating and explaining new values and behaviour by planning ahead, providing information to accompany the change process.

- Choosing staff to talk about the changes and helping people to understand that they are irreversible. Pinpointing regulations that are no longer valid, and suggesting specific alternative behaviour (Lury and Wakeford, 2012).

5. CONCLUSIONS

It should be clear by now that geographic knowledge is fragmented and incomplete, and that we use spatial thinking and reasoning to help us comprehend and use the different environments in which we live in. Equally as obvious is that these processes have been with us since the earliest days of humanoids. In fact, they are so much a part of everyday life that we take spatial thinking and reasoning for granted.

Changes sometimes produce incredible and surprising effects. Possible attitudes to change and the resulting behaviour may be acceptance, indifference, passive resistance and active resistance. If an organization does not tread carefully, these effects can make a shambles of its intentions, which is why strategic plans are sometimes not put into practice.

Patience and intelligence are required to avoid or lessen resistance to change. Minimum resistance is obtained when change is well managed and the different stages are respected. The dissemination of experience enables the change process to be pushed forward. This can motivate and encourage people to accept transformations or hinder the process and consequently oppose and resist change. The conditions for accepting the transformation will be created by consulting and listening to the main actors involved. Those who resist generally have a deep sense of belonging to the institution which should be recognised and accepted.

Resistance can be used satisfactorily if, in the first place, we recognise that it actually exists, and we use it as something positive. This position is much more recommendable than considering resistance as a force to somehow be overcome. Resistance would not occur if we paid more attention to those who “resist” and took their criteria and opinions into account, thus creating a favourable position. At this point, people start to feel that they are a part of the new project because they have been taken into consideration and contribute to the assessments and opinions that initially they were opposed to.

For a deeper understanding of the positive approach, the two basic premises constituting the core of managing resistance in a creative way must be emphasized:

- People are always going to consciously or unconsciously resist what is not in their interest.
- Resistance must be recognized and treated with respect.

Seen from this perspective, resistance becomes an opportunity, a growing asset of the organization or city and contributes to its development. It does not limit or damage relationships between the person giving the orders and those resisting but fosters a suitable climate for approaching strategic planning.

Statistical Analysis can not only provide a better diagnosis of the environment, it is also essential for strategic spatial thinking and strategic action, and therefore for the participative style of the new paradigm.

Out of Statistical methods available, Multivariate Statistical techniques can link past and future and they can contribute to a better assimilation of change. Participatory change is based on new knowledge, based as well on meaningful information and the accurate interpretation of the results of the statistical techniques.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work is part of research project results CSO2013-47833-C4-1-R and the research project CSO2015-63970-R (MINECO/FEDER). State Program of Research Excellence, Development and Innovation Challenges Oriented Society. Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness, Government of Spain.

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