

## Integrative Mechanisms for Addressing Spatial Justice and Territorial Inequalities in Europe

### D8.7 Conceptual Framework for Empirical Research

Version 2

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## Acronyms and Abbreviations

CLD	Causal loop Diagramming
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NUIG	National University of Ireland Galway
OSPA	Oxford Scenario Planning Approach
PSB	Participatory Scenario Building
WP	Work Package

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## 1. Introduction – rationale for Work Package 8

WPs 1-7 have prioritised key areas of empirical research into the phenomenon of spatial injustice and territorial inequalities across interdisciplinary dimensions and spatial scales. The task of WP8 is to a) collate and synthesize this WP evidence of differing experiences and perspectives of spatial justice and territorial cohesion and b) use it as the basis for a participatory scenario-building process that aims to develop and present a series of alternative conceptualisations of the future relating to spatial justice and territorial cohesion. In scenario planning, the users explore the limits of their perspectives, and are exposed to the process of ‘reperceiving’ issues (considering alternatives, questioning assumptions). Scenarios are not a form of intervention in a given situation, they are part of realising one. In this case they are being developed to assist in exploratory work on the issue of territorial cohesion and spatial justice with a view to informing stakeholder’s (in particularly policymakers and institutional stakeholders’) perspectives and decision-making strategies.

Through this process, WP8 seeks to a) illustrate the relevance of a relational perspective to identify and explain the complexity of place-based social and spatial interactions and processes, b) reveal how these interactions and processes converge, and with what potential consequences for the experience of spatial justice; c) inform the development of future territorial cohesion policy in conceptual and applied terms through a co-produced, consensus-based process involving policymakers and other key informants. WP8 culminates in the production of a series of case study accounts of scenario-building that can act as a methodological framework to support policy development for spatial justice and territorial cohesion. It also contributes to the development of theoretical insights into the use of scenario planning as an innovative means of questioning and envisaging possible strategies for managing future spatial equality and territorial cohesion objectives.

**Section 2** provides a rationale for the emphasis on futures thinking, which incorporates scenario-building. It discusses its philosophical and theoretical underpinnings as necessary to reflecting and complementing the critical and relational perspectives being applied by IMAJINE. **Section 3** provides a more detailed overview of scenario planning, also dealing with issues of theory in terms of how it aligns with IMAJINE’s perspectives, and with methodological possibilities and challenges for the actual application of participatory scenario building. **Section 4** outlines the development of an analytical framework for WP8 to collate information emerging from across the preceding work packages and to inform the synthesis report. This framework draws on elements of systems theory and causal loop diagramming. **Section 5** provides detail on some anticipated methods of implementing participatory scenario building exercises with stakeholders.

## 2. A futures perspective on territorial cohesion and spatial justice

Futures research, which incorporates scenario planning, is a long-established approach to understanding possible trends and events in the present, with the aim of preparing for and improving on anticipated developments in the future. It is defined by Mannermaa (1986) as ‘the study of the present reality from the point of view of a special interest of knowledge in the future; knowledge of the future considered characteristically as knowledge of contingent events’ (658). This knowledge of the future always relates to the achievement of some purpose or aim, i.e. some aspect of social development, especially the decision-making processes that underpin it. This purpose normally relates to specific features of reality, for example, ‘desirable features considered worth strengthening, faults or threats worth eliminating, and ‘probable’ lines of development worth being aware of in the future’ (ibid.). Research is based on this present reality, with the application of research results to establish what alternative future developments are possible along with how probable and preferred they are. This is predicated on the purpose of the required knowledge, which in turn influences the epistemological bases of the research.

### 2.1 Philosophical approaches to futures studies

Three main approaches are identified in this regard: predictive, interpretative and critical.

Predictive (positivist) approaches emphasise an objective view based on technical and hard science approaches to knowledge construction and fall within the realm of forecasting future trends based on accuracy of prediction rather than exploring alternative possibilities. Predictive approaches privilege expert knowledge and technical discourses.

Interpretative approaches focus on developing a subjective understanding of social reality that also aids in comprehending and communicating that reality. Contrary to positivist research, interpretative approaches do not seek scientific certainties to future developments. Instead they emphasise the communicative aspects and insights that they reveal, that in turn facilitate joint activity to realise possible futures. Ideas about the future emerge from the researcher becoming immersed in the context (society) in question and making sense of the values and meanings that underpin thinking on social change and that aims at protecting basic human values. Such ideas – e.g. – ethnicity, gender or other categories of social relations - are not normally associated with planning or policy analysis (Inayatullah, 2013).

Critical (emancipatory) approaches aim to free people from preordained notions of destiny that are based on current trends by illustrating alternatives. They present challenges to dominant discourses such as those promoted by the State or others in power that sustain hegemonic versions of the future (Mannermaa, 1986; Inayatullah, 2013;). Critical approaches draw on poststructuralist ideas on

the deconstruction of discourses to reveal the ‘discontinuities in the history of an idea, social formation or value’ (Inayatullah, 2013, 44), tracing how one discourse has become dominant at the expense of others, and how it can be replaced by other possible discourses (ibid.). Critical approaches thus emphasise the development and application (direct or indirect) of alternative possibilities to a ‘probable’ future which forms the object of critique. The notion of ‘distancing’ in critical research relates to connecting objective, more empirical forecasts with the study of associated more subjective issues (based for example on social consciousness) and the ways that these promote social development that is considered desirable, presenting these as future ‘images of the possible that critique the present’ (Inayatullah, 2013, 44).

## 2.2 Theoretical challenges to futures research

It is also argued that futures research has yet to develop a strong basis in social theory. This has been impacted to some extent by the utility-driven, consultancy nature of much futures work in business and government settings (Ahlqvist and Rhisiart, 2015). The emphasis has tended to be on its methods (including scenario development) without reflection on the wider socio-ecological contexts to which they are being applied or the underlying values that pertain to methods selection (Karlsen et al. 2010). According to Ahlqvist and Rhisiart (2015) ‘it is this self-reflexive capacity that is usually lacking in futures exercises in governmental and business settings’ (94). Drawing on Slaughter (2002) they identify three gaps in current futures research approaches: a) an over-emphasis on empirical data at the expense of the non-empirical; b) a non-critical perspective on how the present is defined and bounded; c) a failure to properly represent the existence of global power dynamics that in turn influence the appropriateness of future scenario choices and the possibilities of an organisation to affect futures (94). In this same regard, futures research is also critiqued for not being able to effectively account for discontinuities in an interdisciplinary way that would in turn provide meta-level knowledge on the possibilities and probabilities of realising alternative futures (Mannermaa, 1986). Ahlqvist and Rhisiart (2015) go on to state that futures research must engage with critical social theory to strengthen its scientific research relevance and to provide emancipatory insights at this meta-level about how change is possible across political, economic, social, ecological, technical and value driven levels in balanced and sustainable ways. They outline 3 potential options of pursuing more socio-theoretical critical approaches to futures construction that connects the utilitarian and emancipatory dimensions of same.

The first is an understanding of futures constructed as socio-technical practices that are played out in different societal and expert contexts and that consist of the mundane practice of the everyday. Theoretically, they draw on social constructionism, social constructivism, and science and technology studies. The future is understood as emerging through the interactions of socio-technical networks

in a hybrid form that involves humans, organisations, infrastructures and technology. The role of culture in the mediation of futures perspectives is highlighted, in terms of understanding how the human (ideas, feelings, consciousness) and social worlds interconnect to co-produce social transformation. Everyday practices that simultaneously and implicitly shape futures can include the administrative structures and practices of organisations where an “‘administrative common sense’” (Alqvist and Rhisiart, 2015, 99) perspective prevails, directing everyday decisions that lead towards certain “‘taken-for-granted futures’” (ibid.). How these everyday constructions of mundane futures and associated social practices come into being, particularly within organisational and political contexts are the key questions for analysis. They are open, for example, to Foucaultian critique of the idea of ‘potential governmentality’ (ibid.); of how and why specific future governmental imaginaries might develop.

Second, future-oriented dialectics sees futures as complex events or pathways embodying contradictory trajectories and that are the result of the interplay between theses and anti-theses (ibid.). They create the possibility of alternative imaginings of the future. The approach draws on theories from critical political economy, cultural studies and human geography. Futures are understood as the positions that can emerge in the space between meeting, but opposing development trajectories, with or without the possibility of finding synthesis. These tensions could emerge, for example in the contradictions between dominant world views and those of possible emancipatory alternative futures that are not yet clearly defined but promise something radically different from the present.

Third, socio-economic imaginaries see futures as ‘scripts that are formed in order to induce management and control’ (101). This approach draws theoretically from cultural studies, cultural political economy and critical futures studies. It is based largely on the notion that our social imaginaries are constructed on the basis of accepted sets of expectations and normative notions and images of how the world works and how we should fit in to meet those expectations. The significance of the idea of ‘semiotic economic imaginaries’ as outlined by Jessop and Oosterlynck, (2008) is that we accept a certain order and set of social practices in any social field. When applied to futures knowledge, it indicates a process whereby the production of that knowledge is essentially managed through the way that imaginings about the future are managed and constrained within already defined patterns and categories. It is also achieved through the selective silencing of alternatives through the use of expert opinion and the creation of consensus around pre-determined policy perceptions as opposed to real alternatives.

### 2.3 The challenge of complex problems for futures thinking

According to Raiso and Lundström (2015) futures researchers and leaders in government and industry are looking to complexity thinking or the concept of wicked problems as ways to gain insights into increasingly interdependent dimensions of problems, for example at the level of government or other institutions. They argue that the important issue relates to the process involved; complexity and complex systems do not lend themselves easily to modelling-based scenario building; however, the process makes us engage and imagine what the future might hold (p.3). Based on accounts from three key industry and institutional leaders, they establish the importance of 'collective creation of situational awareness' (3) of the problem, identification of the relevant stakeholders, and identification of how each of these perceives the problem, and where differences emerge, attempting to establish a shared understanding of it through deliberation. Because wicked problems are often connected to other problems, defining an upper-level problem can assist in establishing a shared vision and links to a common process to address it. The horizontal nature of complex problems creates challenges for highly structured organizations, with the tendency to also think hierarchically, and the need to accept that certain ways of acting are also part of the problem (ibid.,4). A danger in addressing wicked problems is that the solutions sometimes proposed are those belonging to tamer problems (hierarchical, authoritative, lacking in collaboration, quicker to resolve).

### 3. Scenario Building as an approach to strategic decision-making in the face of uncertain futures.

Scenario building, or scenario planning is concerned with the strategic management of change, usually in organisational settings or in settings that involve a range of stakeholders focused on specific change issue. It has been used since the 1970s as part of strategic management approaches in companies facing uncertain futures (Saunders, 2009; Ringland, 1998). It is applied by a wide range of sectors and groups, ranging from corporate and industry sectors to governments and NGOs to plan for and manage future change by first imagining what that future might be (Ratcliffe, 2006). It is therefore not about forecasting or predicting the future, but 'a tool for better decision-making' (ibid. 50). Ratcliffe (2000) refers to its origins and applications in industry, commerce, government and the military, and the establishment during that period of a number of agencies and consultancies providing scenario planning services. In more contemporary times, users of scenario building have included the European Commission, the global telecommunications industry and British Airways among others (ibid).

Scenario building is not about predicting or forecasting the future, but rather about ‘qualitative narratives, stories or conversations of alternative futures facing the decision-maker, and that are specifically told to highlight the risks and opportunities involved in specific strategic issues’ (Porter, 1985, in Saunders, 2009, p.19). It is regarded as particularly useful when the past or present are not likely to be a guide for the future (Slocum, 2005). Ratcliffe (2000) refers to the founder of scenario building, Herman Kahn, who coined the phrase ‘thinking the unthinkable’ to reflect its meaning and purpose in generating alternative plausible visions of the future which push thinking beyond narrowly-informed or conventionally-held assumptions about what that future might be (Kahn, in Ratcliffe, 2000, np). It is also described by Avin and Dembner (2001) as a process of matching ‘a possible future with a desired future’ (26) in the sense of wanting to identify and pursue a strategy leading to positive change.

### 3.1 Philosophical considerations in applying participatory scenario building (PSB)

Van der Heijden (1996) links scenario planning with elements of three key, competing paradigms in strategic management which he identifies as rationalist, evolutionary and processual. Each one reflects a dominant way of thinking in organisations in terms of how they anticipate and manage change (organisation in the case of IMAJINE include government at various scales, and related governance institutions). These three paradigms range from a) holding a set of assumptions based on predictability, clarity of intention and expectations of full organisational buy-in (rationalist), to b) a process of building on successful strategies and filtering out the unsuccessful ones (evolutionary), to c) a position where managers feel they can create processes to make organisations more flexible and adaptable, and can act to influence change (processual). Van der Heijden (1996) suggests that in reality elements of all three are to be found in operation in most organisations. In the case of IMAJINE, being broadly aware of the existing nature of organisational thinking and learning will potentially have a bearing on how the PSB process needs to be managed and made relevant to the institutional stakeholders involved. It has already been flagged to some extent in IMAJINE through identification of the degrees of regional autonomy in the different partner countries (p.7). This is not to conflate models of governance and their underlying organisational and decision-making approaches with degrees of regional autonomy but to keep in mind the question of how power is exercised and the relative freedom of those in positions of authority to actually make decisions on change (e.g. anticipating limited authority to make change and thinking about ways to facilitate its uptake via the PSB process and the subsequent outputs; targeting influential stakeholders to take part in the PSB exercises; calculating the risk that PSB exercises could be perceived by some stakeholders as being about ‘going through the motions’). Some of these insights have already

emerged via the expert interviews in WP1 in terms of how they are defining the concepts of territorial cohesion and spatial (in)justice.

### 3.2 The (public) participatory element of PSB:

Although scenario planning as a process is inherently participatory, the context in which it is applied is often an enclosed or private organisational one meaning that its management hierarchies will ultimately dictate the final decisions on its development strategies. Over the last few decades its use in consultations on public good issues has been increasing. One example is in spatial planning where gaining public support for proposed development is recognised as a more acceptable and sustainable approach to achieving quality social, environmental and economic outcomes. In this regard, Chakraborty (2011) points to the reality of there being many publics and therefore no such thing as a singular version of the public interest. Participatory approaches to change on public good issues do involve more complexity in terms of accommodating a more diverse range of expectations and evaluating the significance of the knowledge held by different members of the public who want to contribute to the decision-making process and its outcomes. Avin and Dembner (2001) make the point that while in the private domain businesses can seek flexibility and pursue a unified plan, in the public domain, scenario planning must facilitate the public good via the implementation of policy with all of the conflicting goals and ideas that this involves. Again, using the example of spatial planning, participatory approaches have come to be employed where there has been a growing realisation that technical-rationality and scientific methods have failed to account for the needs of an increasingly heterogeneous society and growing cultural diversity (Chakraborty, 2011). Processes that incorporate 'different ways of knowing that incorporate experiential, intuition and local knowledges' (ibid. 388) and that legitimise them through participatory approaches are increasingly encouraged. The participatory element is what is believed to empower the public and produce meaningful change. Forms of capacity-building so that the public can engage in this process are considered of more importance than advocacy activities that seek to draw attention to issues of injustice and inequality (ibid.).

Participatory approaches have been written about extensively in terms of their potential to promote the exercise of democratic governance and engaged citizenship (Healey, 1998, 2009). They have also been strongly criticised for presenting an illusion of consensus and democracy (Flyvberg, 1998). This idea of achieving consensus as a political aim has been discussed recently by Chantal Mouffe (2016), who argues that in reality social order emerges from ever-present conditions of antagonism, and resulting hegemonic practices 'whose aim is to establish order in a context of contingency' (1). Every order, she argues, is 'predicated on the exclusion of other possibilities' (ibid.), is ..'always the expression of a particular configuration of power relations' (ibid.), and is always open to challenge by

‘counter-hegemonic practices that attempt to disarticulate it in order to install another form of hegemony’ (ibid.). She critiques the two main approaches to democratic politics – aggregative and deliberative – by stating that both assume the possibility of reaching consensus without exclusion through rational procedures (something she regards as impossible and undesirable in that it would prevent the process of collective identity formation for different groups and individuals – the denial of forms of difference and diversity), ignoring what she calls ‘passions’ (2) or the role of affects in forming collective political identities. Her proposition for an ‘agonistic’ perspective is one that values and legitimates difference and conflict as a core condition of democracy, and that promotes collective identities around democratic objectives ‘with the aim of mobilizing them towards democratic designs’ (3) (as opposed, for example to the politically-motivated stoking of passions in order to incite xenophobia, or to the dominant discourses of neoliberal globalization from perceived ‘political elites’ (3) that have given rise to a sense of political exclusion and alienation) (Wingenbach, 2016; Wenman, 2013). The issue is about finding new, inclusive forms of representation that can find space for expression within existing representative institutions, i.e. new processes of discursive construction and representation.

The above debates are of relevance for IMAJINE in several ways when administering the PSB process, particularly the need to arrive at a clearly-articulated position on what constitutes the public good. This is relevant for the way that account is taken of the opinions of all stakeholders - institutional representatives in terms of establishing what their perception of the public good is vis a vis their institutional roles and responsibilities, and public stakeholders in terms of ensuring their knowledge and points of view are accounted for in ways that allow for diverse representations to emerge. In all accounts, conflicting points of view must be elicited and deciphered to identify the underlying issues to which they pertain, and a strategy for arriving at agreed forms of representation for those issues (agreed, even if mutually antagonistic, forms of collective identity). This is important to the success of a PSB process which is seeking to first bring out into the open, and then to steer a path through the diverse views of stakeholders, culminating in a collectively agreed set of positions by the stakeholders on how they want their future to look.

### 3.3 PSB: Detailing the underlying process

A range of processes exists for the actual development of scenarios (van Notten et al. 2003; Slocum, 2005; Börjeson et al. 2006; Saunders, 2009; Chakraborty, 2011) but Ratcliffe (2000) identifies certain common characteristics of all approaches:

- ‘The scenarios should be focussed on the needs of some issue, decision, strategy or plan.
- The scenarios should be logically structured and internally consistent

- The process should be highly flexible and capable of adaptation to the needs of a given situation
- There should be a high degree of 'ownership' of the final product'. (Ratcliffe, 2000, np).

Practically, he identifies the scenario building process as unfolding in a number of key stages (which can vary in number depending on the situation in which it is being applied but are essentially the same overall): 1: Task identification and analysis; 2: Key decision factor appraisal; 3: Driving forces; 4: Ranking; 5: Alternative projections; 6: Scenario development; 7: Interpretation (ibid. np). The issues are first presented in historical context, depending on the focus of the event. According to Roubelat (2006) the important issue is to see how different actors can accept an alternative scenario and its possible impacts on the current environment, and the implications of an emerging ideology which forms the framework for a new paradigm.

Avin and Dembner (2001, p.25) illustrate scenario building as a sequence of stages as an iterative process that refines and refocuses various stages as it unfolds (Figure 1). They identify two processes involved in scenario-building: 1) An objective, analytical one that 'sets limits on the range of possible futures' (26); and 2) one that 'reflects the desires of various interest groups' (ibid.). When combined, these processes serve to align the goals and objectives of the interest groups with the range of complementary 'driving forces' identified in the analytical exercises to produce possible scenarios.

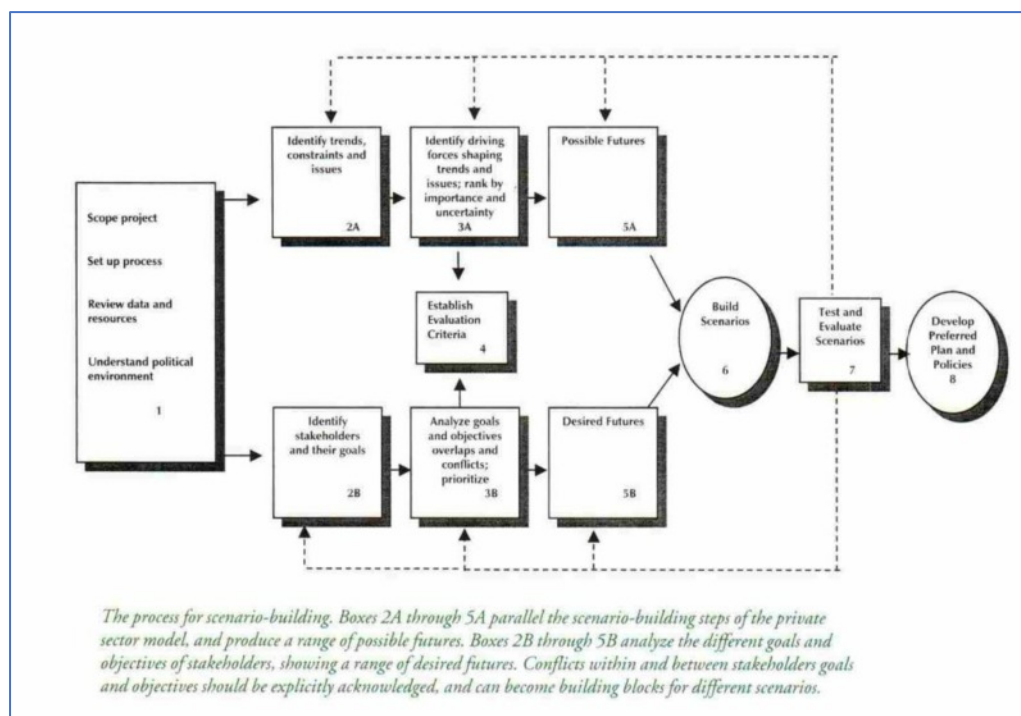


Figure 1 The process for scenario-building. Avin and Dembner, 2001, p.25.

Roubelat (2006) refers to scenario-building as essentially a networking process, and thus a social one, involving the collective participation of a range of actors engaging in a process of making sense of changing environments and to build 'collective representations of possible futures' (519). Ideally these are diverse and differentiated visions of the future, something that is achieved by using a heterogeneous group. Individual members of planning scenario groups hold a set of beliefs, and advance between 1 and 3/4 visions of the future. The level of expertise within the chosen group is seen as less important than its heterogeneity; lack of heterogeneity runs the risk of too many members holding similar beliefs informed by a dominant paradigm (e.g. one currently espoused by the organisation/group), which will result in less diverse future visions.

Scenario building is seen as a step further than just visioning. Avin and Dembner (2001) describe visioning as a process of asking for example: "'What would you like to see happen?'" or 'How would you like your community to look?'" (p22) which in their opinion will lead to a basic and predictable set of goals and objectives that operate to the lowest common denominator and fail to reveal inherent conflicts and tradeoffs. Scenario-building involves the key question of "'What do you think might happen?'" (ibid. p.22), forcing people to account for and propose ways of dealing with those forces that are generating change. They argue that scenarios 'must reflect an integrated, consistent storyline – an explanation of how an underlying reality can unfold under feasible circumstances' (p22), and plausible alternatives must also be examined and analysed. They describe how the process was applied to the Shell Corporation's strategic planning in the 1970s: Account was taken of what was bound to happen ('predetermined' or 'givens', which remain the same for all scenarios) and what might change ('uncertainties'). The identification of uncertainties is what differentiates the subsequently-devised scenarios and facilitates a focus on the underlying structure of the phenomenon in question (i.e. a focus on understanding causes) rather than just on surface trends or patterns. Scenarios were then created based on five identified *driving forces*: *society, technology, environment, politics, and economics (STEPE)*. Surface trends and patterns as forms of technical or quantitative data are important to scenario planning, in that they provide the information necessary to establish the scenario's feasibility, whilst qualitative evidence in the form of stakeholder engagement generates alternative objectives that may not emerge from quantitative methods (Chakraborty, 2011). The use of trends must however be carefully contextualised. Roubelat (2006) points to the observed tendency in larger organisations, for example, to advance visions of the future leading to scenarios that are often informed by the collective representations of the organisation or group to which they belong, and/or which are extrapolations of the past (Chakraborty, 2011). Under these circumstances, when the driving forces to create scenarios (e.g. STEPE approach) are based on trends, they can tend to reflect the dominant paradigm of the

organisation, i.e. reproducing and reinforcing its assumptions, rather than challenging it (Roubelat, 2006). Methodologically, this trend-based scenario-building process tends to be resourced via expert and technical knowledge. In order to challenge the dominant paradigm and present alternative representations of it, the scenario-building process needs to be informed by more innovative perspectives, i.e. trend-breaking assumptions such as the presentation of a major uncertainty (wildcards) to explore scenarios, or imagination to anticipate them. Methodologically, decision-makers or actors from external fields are the source of these alternative scenarios which are then debated and either rejected or promoted as a competing paradigm (ibid.). The aim of IMAJINE is to contribute in ways that move beyond just collective representations to what Roubelat (ibid.) describes as the production of new ideologies in a form of paradigm shift.

### 3.4 PSB: What is the legacy?

Ratcliffe (2003) says that there must be a clear understanding about whether the scenario exercise is just a learning experience, or one connected to the strategic planning and decision-making process (that either is a legitimate objective (81)). In the case of IMAJINE, the preference would be to push for actual planning and decision-making outcomes with the institutional stakeholders in particular, because learning will likely emerge anyway as part of the PSB exercise. The pathway from scenario-building to actual identified possibilities for strategic change to policy and other programme interventions as part of reaching a desired future makes it much more likely that the work of IMAJINE will have real impact. In the language of resilience and resourcefulness, PSB can contribute to the capacity to adapt to change in a strategically prepared way; through developing a distinctive kind of knowledge to help to prepare for and manage change, and to acknowledge and better understand uncertainty. In the context of IMAJINE's focus, it can help to establish the extent to which spatial injustice as an experience is a reflection of the capacity of individuals to react in a 'resilient' or 'resourceful' way. PSB can also be viewed as a form of co-production of policy and practice, methodologically (as a form of toolkit for policymakers) and conceptually.

### 3.5 PSB: Who is the target audience and how is the PSB process related to a specific decision-making opportunity?

For IMAJINE, the main target audience is policy-makers at regional and national levels. These constitute the existing centralised sites of decision-making – the policy-makers' domains (i.e. we must take this participatory scenario building to them) as here is where the initiation of a paradigm shift emerging from the IMAJINE WP evidence needs to occur (as opposed to an event focused on, for example, an NGO, or a citizens' group which will likely make it more challenging for policy-makers to accept the relevance of the exercise). One typical example of an already-existing forum is the regional or local authority/municipality process of devising spatial development plans which

involve a consultation process with members of the public or other stakeholders. This type of forum has very successfully run PSB consultations in order to focus with the public on long-term regional sustainability (see Chakraborty's 2010, 2011 accounts of the 'Reality Check' participatory scenario exercises held in the Washington Metropolitan Area and the State of Maryland). A similar type of 'event' that links strategically into some planned policy-making or other scheduled strategic decision-making plan would be advantageous, as opposed to a totally simulated exercise that makes the development of a strategic plan based on the emerging scenarios more challenging a) for institutional stakeholders in having to then devise a process of policy implementation, and b) for the IMAJINE partnership which may not be able to have a role in supporting such a process if it falls outside the time limit or funding scope of the project.

### 3.6 Oxford Scenario Planning Approach (OSPA)

This research draws particularly from the Oxford Scenario Planning Approach (OSPA). This approach places particular emphasis on understanding the nature of connectivity between internal (organisational) and external worlds as it affects decision-making about achieving a more desirable future. It accepts that the external, contextual environment is increasingly prone to change, some of which is evident via major trends such as climate change and globalization, but much of which is unpredictable and which gives rise to uncertainty about what the future might look like, with repercussions at micro as well as macro levels. It is these perceptions of this contextual environment and how strategic responses to possible and probable change are planned – this understanding of the connectivity between internal and external as sets of relational networked arrangements - that are the focus of interest for the OSPA. The contextual environment is acknowledged as increasingly complex, and no longer suited to traditional but narrowly-focused forecasting or macro-level predictions. OSPA advocates social ecology theory as a foundation for scenario planning. This means that in any study of strategic planning within an organisation, the focus is not the organisation, with uncertainties are dealt with as predictable events centred on tackling competitive forces through rational thinking. It is instead about an open-systems perspective of an organisation's strategic situation – the 'shared field of interorganisational action' (Ramírez and Selsky, 2016, 92) and the position and behaviour of actors therein. Collaborative interactions are viewed as key components of strategic planning, particularly those that make up the wider operating field of the organisation and that reflect the forces with which it is engaging (for example, multi-stakeholder or multi-partnership collaborations for regional economic development or to address climate change) (Ibid.). Social ecological approaches to strategy making involve dialogue and reflection, processes of learning and unlearning, and the development of knowledge-based networks leading to innovative and adaptive capacity-building to address change.

Methodologically, OSPA favours qualitative approaches. In addition to storylines it also employs system mapping to describe scenarios, and causal loop diagrams as a means to visually represent the key variables that produce the system along with positive and negative connections between them. These aid the scenario learner to see how the scenario is stable or unstable and the possible future implications for the system in question (Ramírez and Wilkinson, 2018). Such models are not intended to be applied in deterministic ways but rather to generate discussion and facilitate the reframing and re-perceiving process.

Because of the complexity of most system contexts, OSPA opts to hone in on three to four dominating issues for the system, for the scenario planner and for the stakeholders involved. The methodology is an iterative one, based on a process of ‘framing, reframing, and re-perception’ (Ramírez and Wilkinson, xiii, 2018); in other words, recognising the dominant frame of reference for understanding the issues in question, engaging in a ‘strategic conversation’ (van der Heijden, xii, 2018) with planners and stakeholders to share insights, to achieve joint learning and to develop new frames of reference and to re-perceive the situation along with alternative available options. Ramírez and Wilkinson (2018) associate this process with a shift in mindset to more open and flexible ways of perceiving the issues in question. The OSPA emphasis is on ‘learning *with* rather than *from* scenario planning’ (ibid. xiv), where the learner develops a ‘sense of future’ (ibid.) that is focused on the context rather than the self, and where open system thinking and model building in groups is used to draw out relevant knowledge and generate a range of future contexts in order to test and improve assumptions about the future.

#### 4. IMAJINE critical research focus – setting the context for Work Package 8

The IMAJINE project is premised in its entirety on the need for a critical perspective to reveal the complex range and nature of processes that give rise to understandings and experiences of spatial injustice, and to envisage more desirable scenarios as alternatives to current manifestations of territorial cohesion. It achieves this in the first instance via Work Packages 1-7. WP1 analyses and critiques contemporary understandings of territorial cohesion and spatial justice particularly as they feature in policy and programme interventions at regional, national and EU levels. WPs2, 3 and 4 identify and analyse a range of empirical data that indicate main patterns and trends that potentially create and reproduce the processes that generate spatially unjust outcomes at national, regional and local levels. These findings are connected with qualitative evidence gained through indepth interviews that explore the more subjective understandings and experiences of respondents emerging in case study regions (WPs 5, 6 and 7).

WP8 in turn is based on the findings and conclusions of these WPs as a means to further illustrate emerging alternative ways of knowing and understanding territorial cohesion and spatial justice. It connects back to the originally stated aims and objectives of IMAJINE in terms of reflecting on the progress of IMAJINE to contribute to new knowledge of these phenomena. It is informed in the first instance by IMAJINE's **conceptual framework** that draws on critical understandings of territorial cohesion, spatial justice, relational spatial theory and critical political economy. These concepts establish the scope of the phenomena under investigation (via WPs 1-7). As a **theoretical framework** for WP8, the notion of spatial justice as socially-constructed, combined with a relational perspective on how it plays out in a range of spatial contexts via networks of causal relations that are distinctive in their (uneven) manifestation within and across localities, helps to explain the relationships between phenomena, as well as outcomes of and potential responses to same.

#### 4.1 Analytical Framework

WP8 first constructs an overarching **analytical framework** that further examines these emergent findings in order to draw on key points of connection and tension and the processes that underpin them; illustrating for example the relevance of political economic relations to social and cultural processes in framing the observed experiences and understandings of territorial cohesion and spatial justice, or how structural aspects of spatial marginalisation and spatial injustice connect with certain ways of measuring and categorising inequalities. This framework forms the basis of the Synthesis Report.

The framework draws on elements of **systems thinking** to reflect the complexity of perspectives emerging from the preceding WPs that all point to different interconnected processes and elements of an overall 'systems map of EU regionalisation'. It invokes the notion of a 'soft system', i.e. a system as a social construct (Checkland and Poulter, 2006) with the emphasis on human perceptions, the role of subjectivity, and the social construction of problems and solutions. Whilst acknowledging the value of quantitative data to inform understanding of the problem, it recognises that quantitative approaches cannot always take account of the system's complex and changing context and thus emphasises a qualitative approach to collating and interpreting evidence.

It draws on Ison's (2010) idea of a system as an epistemological device to engage with the particular purpose of the study in question, to define its boundaries and relevant elements for study. In other words, the system is not real, but rather acts as a heuristic device, used for the purpose of the study in question to organise and discuss the relevant issues and to aid understanding. In the case of this research, it acts as a method of representing the EU region as a form of social-economic system that is increasingly complex and interconnected, under the sustained influence of globalisation,

technological advancement and mobility of people, goods and services, and one facing sustainability problems and challenges connected to the achievement of territorial cohesion and spatial justice. Recent conceptualisations of systems thinking also acknowledge the increasingly complex nature of problem solving within systems, stemming from the growing interdependencies and nonlinear relationships among its various components (Grohs et al. 2018).

Systems thinking emphasises the need to focus in an indepth way on its underlying structure in order to understand its behaviour (Richmond, 1994; Coral and Bokelman, 2017). Problematic situations as emergent phenomena of systems cannot be addressed solely by reductionist analytical approaches; they require thinking about ‘the interconnections between a system’s elements, its dynamics, and its relations with the environment. Systems thinking studies boundaries, linkages, synergies and emergent properties with the aim being to understand and take into account its interdependencies and dynamics. It means keeping the ‘bigger picture’ in mind, even when a study focuses on a specific aspect or sub-system’ (Darnhofer et al. 2012, 7). Systems thinking also favours interdisciplinary approaches in order to capture this complexity. This research uses the concept of a system as one that evolves and transforms through new adaptive pathways.

In the case of IMAJINE, systems thinking is applied to understand the nature of change and emergent problems in a hypothetical territorially cohesive region. A territorially cohesive region is conceptualised as one that reflects balanced development and prevents territorial imbalances, reduces existing disparities and engenders coherence between (spatially relevant) sectoral and regional policies (CEC, 2004). The failure of cohesion is perceived as disintegration, detachment and disconnection, with associated impacts on places and populations.

A systems thinking approach adds to knowledge about how the system functions and what the sustainability challenges are. It reflects on the adaptative structures best suited to deal with the changes and uncertainties in territorial cohesion and spatial justice management.

## 4.2 Key Concepts to Underpin Analysis

An analytical framework for IMAJINE that draws on systems thinking is structured around several key concepts that focus on identifying and rendering coherent those complex processes and interconnections that condition how and where spatial injustice is experienced and how and where territorial cohesion and spatial justice can be achieved and sustained. This includes the concepts already outlined in the ‘State of the Art’ and in WP1 that include territorial cohesion, spatial justice, relational spatial theory, and critical political economy. It also includes the concepts of vulnerability, sustainability, equity and autonomy, that are in line with constructing a synthetic account of territorial cohesion under conditions of spatial injustice:

**Vulnerability:** In the context of IMAJINE, vulnerability, in particular spatial vulnerability, refers to the ways in which access to a fair distribution of resources within social space is limited by a range of actions and processes that risk the systemic exclusion of certain groups. It draws particularly on the work of Lefebvre (1991), Harvey (2010) and Soja (2010) in interrogating the ways in which socio-spatial dynamics combine with variables such as socio-economic status, gender, age or ethnicity to produce conditions of spatial vulnerability (i.e. the drivers of spatial vulnerability such as historical, socio-cultural processes, power dynamics, identity politics, etc.).

**Sustainability:** Sustainability for IMAJINE relates to how development occurs within the system to secure its future in an intergenerational context; the idea of development of the system needing to take account of all of its parts as interconnected, and not as separate elements. It is one that takes account of not just rational, economic aspects of development, but also of social and cultural factors that provide the meaning for decisions taking place within a spatial rather than a sectoral context. The spatial aspect of sustainable development has been defined via strategies such as the ESDP as a 'unifying element and as a means for maximising the strength of the relationships between environment, society and economy' (Roberts, 2003, 229). Here, sustainable development highlights the achievement of social cohesion and social justice as core objectives, and the importance of mutually re-enforcing all three spheres in a cross-sectoral policy approach that is facilitated by an emphasis on spatial management (ibid).

**Equity:** Equity, particularly spatial equity, refers to the distribution of resources based on some agreed notion of social justice. Equity and justice are often used interchangeably, thus equity can also be thought about in terms of distributive justice and relates particularly to access to resources in given spatial contexts (and in terms of social policy how decisions are made around this notion of entitlement and access) and what range of circumstances and conditions curtails that access. Equity invokes the notion of moral judgement, of fairness, but what these mean are also open to interpretation, and could for example be established using market-based criteria. Geographical equity in relation to public services could involve provision, access or outcome (Powell and Boyne, 2001).

**Autonomy:** Autonomy in the case of IMAJINE focuses particularly on forms of governance, in particular the balance between the achievement of equity and retention of autonomy at the regional and local level, which may result in trade-offs between territorial justice and local democracy, but which also takes greater account of local diversity in the way that more centralist approaches cannot (Powell and Boyne, 2001). Regional or local autonomy is identified in levels of decentralisation, for example, and associated transfer of powers of fiscal, administrative and policy

decision-making. It is also endorsed via growth-oriented economic and regional development policies (Pike et al. 2012). Other emergent trends that reflect a region's wish to become an autonomous entity from the state whilst retaining a nationalist identity potentially reflect perceptions of avoidable spatial injustices inflicted by the state.

### 4.3 Framework Methodology

The framework draws on Causal Loop Diagramming (CLD) (Cavana and Mares, 2004; AC4, Columbia University) to identify and visualise this network of dynamic relationships that make up the hypothetical EU regional system. The purpose is to address the key phenomenon under investigation – EU territorial cohesion and spatial justice. CLD is a qualitative method for mapping and visualizing how different components or variables in a system are interconnected and interdependent, and how they create a dynamic through the way they influence each other and influence the phenomenon under investigation. The overall aim is to identify points in the system at which interventions may be applied in order to move it towards more desirable outcomes. This is done by identifying feedback relationships between the variables (positive and negative) as processes that control the system and focusing on these as points of intervention to bring about change. The framework thus represents a relational model that captures the fluidity of the connections and relationships between elements and across temporal and spatial scales. It identifies the factors (variables) and the feedbacks (causal links), through which the system engages in flows of information and material. Positive feedback represents a speeding up of flows within the system (i.e. how a range of factors and relationships combine to create a problematic situation), while negative feedback represents slowing or dampening down (aiming to stabilise). A hypothetical model is constructed below (Figure 2) to illustrate what a causal loop diagram focusing on links to migration with reduced entrepreneurial support in sending regions might look like (WP5). The process is structured as follows (adapted from AC4, Columbia University):

1. Create the causal 'story' behind the phenomenon by identifying the variables that are important to it, that are leading up to an impression of the problem of achieving territorial cohesion and spatial justice. (This has already taken place to a certain extent via the IMAJINE 'State of the Art', and through WP1).
2. Identify the key variable (e.g. Entrepreneurs outmigration due to reduced institutional supports – WP5). Plot this on the systems map.
3. Identify 2-3 primary factors/variables that directly influence or are influenced by the key variable showing the main identified variables (components). Add these to the systems map.



#### 4.4 Work packages as ‘subsystems’ or ‘domains’

This hypothetical regional system represents a geographical area encompassing all the processes and activities related to its functioning, including socio-economic, organisational, and technological. For the purposes of this study it is constructed around 6 key ‘domains’ as defined by WPs 2-7 to constitute a ‘systems map of EU regionalisation’ in order to imagine a territorially-cohesive, spatially just EU region as a hypothetical space, and to illustrate how multiple variables interact within it over time (Figure 3).



**Figure 3: IMAJINE work packages**

Exploration of these domains via the selected local partner-level case studies reveals the underlying processes that explain the different manifestations of territorial cohesion and spatial justice at regional levels. Some local regions from which the case studies are selected are stronger and some weaker and evolving at different rates and in different ways (depending on historical trajectories and development pathways) and influenced by things like agency of actors and key policy. Some are shaped by existing trajectories such as claims to autonomous status. All of these elements are interconnected and exist and evolve in a relational way.

Domains are constituted by the remits of WPs 1-7. A range of Causal Loop Diagrams for each WP (following Steps 1-10) is produced, based on key issues emerging from each WP. An initial list of anticipated emerging causal feedback relationships is outlined overleaf (Table 1):

**Table 1: Sample of anticipated causes/causal feedback relationships/drivers) (list to be expanded)**

Internal (to a case study region)	External (EU 'region' and wider)
Governance and institutional arrangements	Globalization
Innovation	Technological advances
Migration	Migration
Austerity legislation/ policies/ decisions/ programmes	Geopolitical arrangements
Social movement activity	Demographic trends
Legal	Macroeconomic trends
Social capital mobilisation	
Mobility	
Market conditions	
Poverty	
Access (to services, resources, etc)	
Lack of skills/finance/information	
Political reluctance to change	

## 5. PSB Testing Process - Methods

In applying the synthetic model of spatial justice to the focus group context, IMAGINE proposes additional innovative methods to conventional text-based qualitative methods including performance ethnography and role-play. Drawing on performance-based social science, performance ethnography is concerned with the ways in which people experience everyday life and enact cultural meaning therein (Denzin, 2003). Performance ethnography moves beyond the representational to the presentational (McCall, 2000), where knowing is based on immediacy and involvement (Conquergood, 1998). In the context of spatial justice, performative discourse would be concerned with how meanings shape experiences of injustice (ibid) and aims to reveal underlying processes that give rise to them. Role play has been used predominantly in the area of IT systems and technical product design in making end users participants in development processes and in enhancing developers' understanding of future use contexts (Seland, 2006). Sato and Salvador (1999) describe the use of theatre techniques in focus group sessions in what they call a 'focus troupe process' (36), where short dramatic vignettes are staged, featuring the product concept and how it might be used. Strömberg et al. (2004) describe the value of role play using both focus group

members and actors as part of interactive scenario building in concept definition where it draws out ideas, innovations and problems that would not be recognised through other techniques.

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