

Journal of Urban Cultural Studies  
Volume 12 Number 1

© 2025 The Author(s). Published by Intellect Ltd. Article. English language.  
Open Access under the CC BY licence. [https://doi.org/10.1386/jucs\\_00098\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/jucs_00098_1)  
Received 29 January 2024; Accepted 5 July 2024; Published Online May 2025

---

**LAURENT MATTHEY**

University of Geneva and UMR AAU – CRESSON

**SIMON GABERELL**

University of Applied Sciences and Arts Western Switzerland  
[HES-SO]

**JULIE AMBAL**

University of Geneva

**ELENA COGATO LANZA**

École polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne

# Promoting a master plan by encouraging participation: On the culture of convergence in urban planning

**ABSTRACT**

*The aim of this contribution is to help develop a new model of the use of storytelling in planning. To this end, it draws on media studies research as well as literary studies that examine so-called transmedia storytelling devices. The authors use this method to examine the communication strategy around the 2030 Cantonal Master Plan of the Republic and Canton of Geneva (Switzerland). This communication strategy, which attempts to construct the reception of*

**KEYWORDS**

narrative  
storytelling  
transmedia storytelling  
communication  
public debate  
plan making

Delivered by Intellect to:

Guest (guest)

IP: 195.176.241.246

On: Thu, 08 Jan 2026 11:37:56

[www.intellectbooks.com](http://www.intellectbooks.com) 119

*development projects, mobilizes practical regimes that can strengthen the engagement of different audiences with the process of giving narrative form to future urban developments. Communication and public participation in an urban project tend to hybridize, thereby complexifying debates on the use of storytelling in planning, which often contrast its educational use (explain projects to the general public) with its manipulative use (make projects desirable so they may be accepted). By conducting an analysis through the prism of transmedia storytelling, we can simultaneously consider these two aspects of communication in planning.*

## INTRODUCTION

The aim of this contribution is to help develop a new model of the use of storytelling in planning (Throgmorton 1992, 1996; Aravot 1995; Sandercock 2003; Childs 2008; Cohen 2008; Purcell 2009; Matthey 2014a; Filep et al. 2014; Rannila and Loivaranta 2015; Olensen 2017; Ortiz 2022). Among the publications that specifically address this topic (rather than those that look at the stories told by plans [Walter 2013], or attempt to show the poetics inhabiting those plans [Keunen and Verraest 2012; Uyttenhove et al. 2021]), we identify the existence of two antagonistic currents: one which sees storytelling as a democratizing tool, the other as an instrument of power (Fischler 2000; Sharp and Richardson 2001; Sandercock 2003; Ernwein and Matthey 2019; Matthey et al. 2023). One question that arises is whether these two currents are linked to a conception of the making of development plans according to which different stages follow one another chronologically, from conception to application via their adoption by public authorities. Instead of this linear model, we propose a so-called reticulate model, which is more sensitive to the diversity of media and formats mobilized to give narrative form to both development policies and related artefacts (documents, projects, etc.). To this end, we draw on media studies research as well as literary studies that examine so-called transmedia storytelling devices (Jenkins 2006, 2010, 2013; Jenkins et al. 2017; Ryan 2015, 2018). Transmedia storytelling can be defined as a communication technique that uses several formats and media to disseminate narrative content; this technique sometimes employs a participatory mode, allowing different audiences to contribute to the plot.

We use this conceptual apparatus to describe the long-term changes in the communication strategy of the 2030 Cantonal Master Plan of the Republic and Canton of Geneva. This now includes several annual events, which come in various formats (round tables, exhibitions, concerts, theatre shows, etc.), in an attempt to raise awareness of ongoing urbanization projects in the region. In this context, we discuss the hypothesis that communication and public participation do not exclude one another; rather, they tend to hybridize. Indeed, an increasing and diverse number of communication tools are mobilized to promote urban projects; at the same time, many of these tools are used to widen the audiences taking part in city making. In each of these areas, the aim is often to strengthen citizens' engagement (with all the ambiguity that this term entails, depending on whether the focus is on empowering citizens or on involving residents in the dissemination of a territorial vision that is not necessarily their own) with the planning process or urban projects. Rather than contrast these terms, it seems more appropriate to consider them from the point of view of their entanglement.

Delivered by Intellect to:

Guest (guest)

IP: 195.176.241.246

On: Thu, 08 Jan 2026 11:37:56

First, we situate our subject within the narrative turn in planning theory, suggesting a less linear approach to urban communication (Section 2). Section 3 lays out the theoretical frame of reference this monograph draws on, namely, transmedia storytelling. Sections 4 and 5 detail how transmedia storytelling was put into practice in a Genevan context, describing the various formats and events used to engage the public. Section 6 places the results obtained within the wider context of the current literature, shedding light on the issues and challenges of this approach. The conclusion (Section 7) returns to the potential for strengthening transmedia devices' power to act.

## FROM NARRATIVE TO STORYTELLING IN PLANNING

Works that have dealt with narrative in the field of planning have long had a fluid definition of their subject (Ameel 2016, 2021 – see Box 1). For some authors, the term 'narrative' refers to the imaginaries mobilized by urban planning practice (Secchi 1984). For others, it relates to the stories told by users when they are involved in development projects (Healey 1992). For others still, the term is used to show how some planning projects are turned into plots, enabling their realization (Throgmorton 1992, 1996).

Building on these reflections, researchers and practitioners have been interested in the use of narrative as a communication tool in planning (Sandercock 2003; Olensen 2017). More specifically, Van Hulst (2012) distinguishes 'two currents' in works that deal with storytelling in the field of planning theory. The first one includes writings that treat planning almost like any other narrative activity, with 'planning documents and the plans themselves' (2012: 302) telling stories or employing a certain poetics. Some authors have thus shown that it is possible to analyse the activity of planners by using literary-theory concepts. Planning entails a simultaneous organization of space and time

### **Box 1: Narrative and storytelling in planning**

The definition of narrative in urban planning has led to important clarification work, notably by Lieven Ameel (2016). The latter distinguishes different uses of the term. 'Narratives *in* planning' relate to the use of narratives by planners and designers (narrative here is approached as a project resource). They refer to the poetics (in a literary theoretical sense) of planning or designing space, which is a practice close to the literary activity in that they plot time and space. 'Narratives *of* planning' relate to the use of narrative by actors involved in planning in order to create a story about it or use narrative to explain a project. Other studies have used Gérard Genette's typology to try and distinguish between first- and second-degree narratives. The first type relates to Plans and other urban planning documents, which are mostly conventional narratives. Indeed, they are not primarily and necessarily produced to tell someone a story but rather to organize, frame and legitimise the act of planning. The second type refers to all the 'texts' produced to explain and justify a plan or development policies. Storytelling is supposed to fall under this second category, which is close to the narrative of urban planning in Ameel's typology. The communication device described in this monograph relates to this dimension.

(Keunen and Verraest 2012; Uyttenhove et al. 2021) and echoes, for example, the chronotopes identified by the literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin ([1984] 2004). Planning is telling a story (Walter 2013). Similarly, literary figures and tropes can be identified in urban planning documents, such as utopia, idyll or pastoral (Keunen and Verraest 2012; Uyttenhove et al. 2021). Furthermore, this narrative dimension allows both the planning process and the urban or architectural project to contribute to the meaning of inhabited space (Childs 2008; Dionne 2018; Vitalis and Guéna 2017).

The second current identified by Van Hulst refers to works that see storytelling as a way of improving actors' practice, particularly in terms of more democratic communication (2012: 303). In this sense, it is the vehicle for more participatory and inclusive planning (Broadhead 2018). This is a long-standing current. As early as 1992, Patsy Healey noted that narrative facilitated the understanding of complex processes by transposing them into language that did not require particular skills. It makes it possible to grasp often technical or abstract reasoning by using natural language and a story. Other planning theorists have further shown that storytelling is an important tool for making planning policies more intelligible or development projects more comprehensible (Sandercock 2003). It is even likely to strengthen critical judgement by bringing projects down to more everyday dimensions.

### ***Two conceptions of storytelling in planning***

From our perspective, we see two distinct approaches in this second current. While many studies conceive of storytelling as the means for a more democratic type of planning, many others approach it as a communication tool meant to enable the social acceptability of public policies. In the early 2000s, the close relationship between storytelling and political communication has indeed led to a renewal of critical approaches. The latter see the use of narrative in planning as the lever of a manipulative form of education: while it is true that narrative enables access to the issues pertaining to policies, documents and development projects, it also constructs their acceptability.

Some studies have looked at the use of narrative from the point of view of urban governance (Duranel 2019; Ouvrard 2016). According to these works, storytelling facilitates the exercise of a certain kind of soft power (Matthey 2011). The spread of these principles seems, moreover, to be linked to the neo-liberal turn in public policies (Purcell 2009), the structure of urban authorities (Irazábal 2009; Lambelet 2019), or the revival of territorial marketing (Jensen 2007). The storytelling line of enquiry builds on previous research focused on the issue of discourse (Hastings 1999; Jacobs 2006) or rhetoric (Fisher and Forester 1993; Fisher 2009). As a communication strategy, storytelling helps persuade without resorting to an argumentative discourse (Matthey 2014a). By employing a conceptual apparatus derived from non-representational theories (Arpin et al. 2015; Peltola and Tuomisaari 2015), researchers here have looked at sensory regimes. The latter are meant to direct the audience's attention to certain dimensions of the projects rather than others (Ernwein and Matthey 2019).

### ***From a linear to a reticulate model***

One fact stands out in these works. Although Throgmorton (2003) but also Sandbrook (2010) were early in inviting planning researchers and practitioners to consider the metamorphoses of narrative in the age of the 'Network

Society’, very little research has been carried out in line with the programme they outlined (we should however cite the recent reflections of Ortiz and Millan [2019] on the question of transmedia storytelling in urban planning). Storytelling continues to be approached mainly from the point of view of a specific medium: the plan (Mandelbaum 1991), the project (Bulken et al. 2015), urban planning documents (Ameel 2016) or documents accompanying plans (Matthey et al. 2023). Yet, narrative in planning is increasingly often deployed by means of various formats: plans, technical documents,

Vision >	Plan >	Document >	Discourse >	Narrative
An idea of future issues and means of implementation.	A plan that spatializes a vision.	A technical-administrative document that explains the plan.	A political discourse to legitimize the plan.	A general public narrative to explain the plan.
"Narratives for planning"	"Narratives in planning"	"Narratives in planning"		"Narratives of planning"

Figure 1: Using Storytelling in Urban Planning: A Linear Model. Source: Matthey et al. (2023).

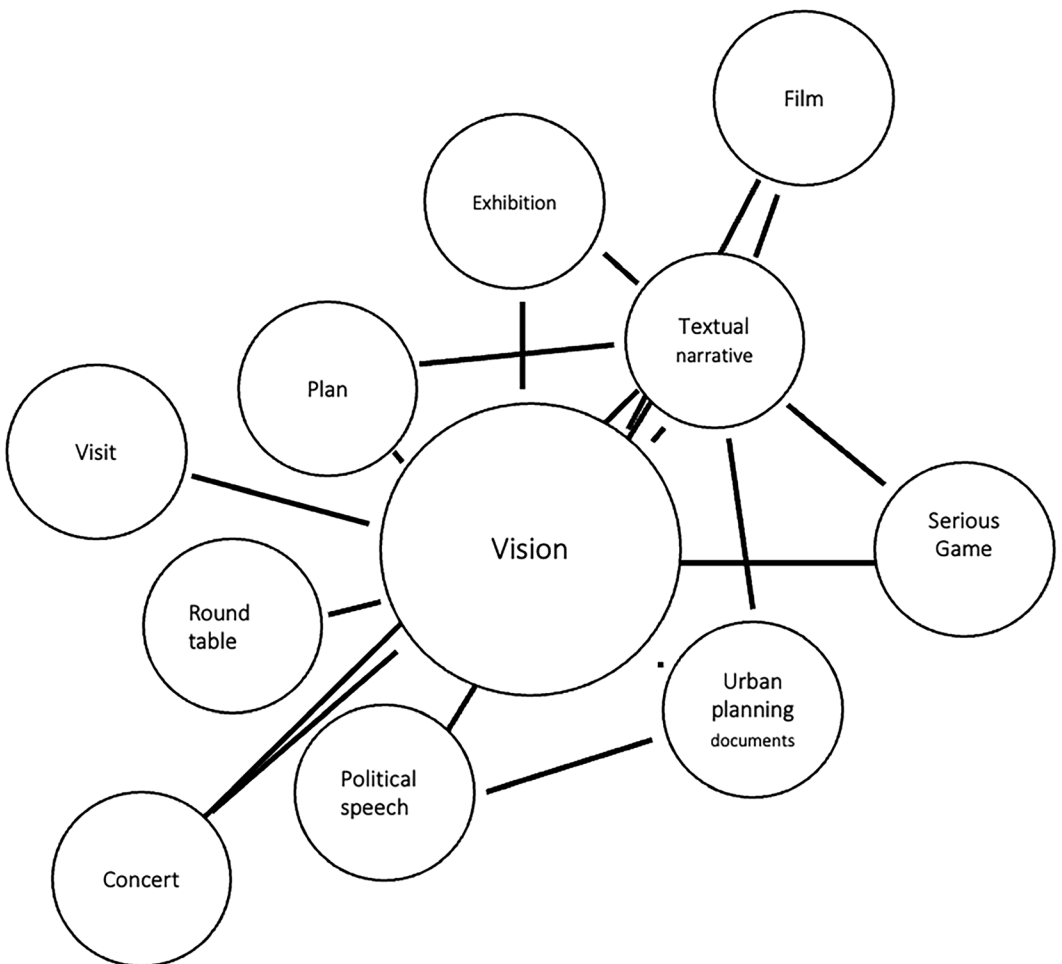


Figure 2: The Use of Storytelling in Urban Planning: A Reticulate Model. Source: Matthey (2022).

an elected government's roadmap, popularizing printed material, websites, promotional videos, exhibitions, round tables, art events, various social media posts, etc. This deployment tends to be increasingly simultaneous, which, in a way, disrupts the chronology of planning media. However, narrative in planning is still more often than not approached according to a linear model (Figure 1).

According to this model, giving a narrative form to urban planning documents (which materialize a political vision) allows a wider public to understand them. Depending on the studies we favour, this understanding will make it possible to either (1) better discuss the project and, therefore, deliberate or (2) ensure that the message is received according to its originator's wishes and, therefore, consent to it. However, the deployment of narrative in planning through the simultaneous use of various formats and media leads to an understanding of storytelling through the prism of a reticulate model (Figure 2).

Every development plan is, of course, the result of a *regional vision*, which is legitimized by an *urban planning document*. This *technical and political discourse* of an argumentative kind is regularly accompanied by *various discourses*, some of which are *narratives in the strict sense of the term* in that they turn the vision contained in the document into a plot, mobilizing *narrative* techniques to tell a story in a different language, but also to have an effect on the recipient. These *narratives* are most often part of a *text*, but they also come in the form of *images* (animated or not) and *experiences, which leave more or less room for 'readings'*, that is, interpretations and creative elaborations by different audiences. This gives rise to a new subject, which has been little studied by planning theory and raises important practical issues. Research done in the fields of media and literary studies, which has looked at transmedia storytelling, offers some interesting theorizing avenues.

## STORYTELLING THROUGH THE PRISM OF TRANSMEDIA

In 2006, Henry Jenkins published an important work in the field of cultural and media studies: *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. The book describes the emergence of a new way of accessing cultural products, namely, transmedia storytelling. Thus, Jenkins notes that cultural products (films, series, books, etc.) increasingly come in various media formats (websites, video games, spin-offs, etc.). These give rise to further narrative lines, adding other dimensions to the original story. Looking more specifically at the case of the *Matrix* film franchise, Jenkins (2006) shows how by turning this 'story world' into different products, it is possible to expand the empire of fiction, inviting different audiences to participate in the creation of a fictional world.

### **Promoting different stories about a possible world**

Many researchers tend today to see transmedia storytelling as 'the most important narrative mode of our time' (Ryan 2015: 2). It is thus claimed that it nourishes new writing practices in various forms. In the field of journalism, for example, it translates into the emergence of the new documentary genre of 'transmedia nonfiction' (Ryan 2015). This is characterized by the use of various media for the purposes of a long-term investigation, providing different means of accessing the journalistic research conducted: a website, an article, videos, social-media posts, etc.

Delivered by Intellect to:

Guest (guest)

IP: 195.176.241.246

On: Thu, 08 Jan 2026 11:37:56

However, theoreticians of transnarrativity have pointed out that transposing a fictional world into different media is not new. Mary Laure Ryan (2018, 2015) reminds us that it is already at work in the adaptations of great myths into literary works or theatre plays. However, the audience's involvement in the creation of parallel narratives and its participation in the production of 'narrative extensions' is radically new. It allows us to clearly determine what transmedia storytelling is. An adaptation tells *the same story* in different worlds or by means of different media. As for transmedia storytelling, it seeks to create 'different stories about a given storyworld' (Ryan 2015: 2). Therefore, the production of cultural works needs to be grasped differently. It is the interactions between a 'media system', various 'platforms', heterogeneous 'audiences' and multiple 'modes of engagement' (Jenkins 2013: 3) that need to be examined.

### **A way to gain a deeper understanding of the contents**

Indeed, Jenkins stresses the 'radical intertextuality' and 'multimodality' (Jenkins 2013: 10) inherent in convergence culture. The phrase 'radical intertextuality' reflects the fact that a work often comes in the form of several products that interact among themselves. These interactions help gain a deeper *understanding of a world*. But they are not needed to be able to follow the main plot. What they provide is the opportunity to develop a different point of view, helping to diversify the possible ways in which the story conveyed by the main work can be read. This intertextuality, explains Jenkins, can occur 'within the same medium' or 'through various formats' (Jenkins 2013: 11).<sup>1</sup>

As for 'multimodality', it reflects the different media used to convey information. Transmedia storytelling makes it possible to diversify the ways in which messages are conveyed (Jenkins 2013: 12). It helps, in a way, to extend the range of information available on a given world, encouraging experience rather than passive reception. Multimodality thus reinforces the relative autonomy of narrative elements. Narrative extensions can grow in a manner specific to a medium – and remain confined to it. Satellite narratives emerge around a 'mothership'<sup>2</sup> that influences them without necessarily being affected by them (Ryan 2015).

### **Stimulating audience engagement**

What matters is that transmedia storytelling encourages the audience to engage. The latter can deploy ordinary creativity by developing alternative points of view about the story, which enrich the overall narrative world when shared with other 'fans'. The audience thus helps develop the work (MacAdams 2016: 2), which becomes collective.

Theoreticians of transmedia have, in fact, looked at the types of interactions a fan can have with a given 'story'. Thus, there is 'internal interactivity' (Ryan 2015: 11), which is determined by the media system itself. The technologies that make transmedia storytelling possible play the role of a script: they prescribe ways of doing. 'External interactivity' refers to the options a fan has among the documents provided by the media system. Finally, 'productive interactivity' consists of the traces of media interactions left by other fans. These traces participate in the co-production of peripheral plots that do not impact the mothership but significantly stimulate fans' engagement with the consumption of the cultural product.

Many works on transmedia storytelling, particularly those in the field of media studies, have nevertheless stressed the fact that the initial producer

1. The English quotes are back-translations of the French edition, not the original quotes.
2. In this text, the term 'mothership' refers to the matrix story from which satellite narratives can develop. This conception draws inspiration from the works of Marie-Laure Ryan (2013, 2016), who sees the mothership as the original text from which other products are derived. Generally speaking, understanding narrative satellites requires understanding the logic of the main story, although this is not strictly necessary (Huang 2022). Sometimes, parallel stories can affect the matrix story or become its centre (Kustritz 2017). In the case of the communication around the Genevan master plan studied here, the mothership is the master plan itself; the satellite stories are those that are emulated to disseminate the matrix narrative.

3. The English quotes are back-translations of the French edition, not the original quotes.

often takes advantage of the audience's engagement. The existence of many platforms, within a given media system, helps create and/or maintain an audience. The participatory ideal of transmedia storytelling is thus part of a communication strategy. An example of this intentionality is given by Jenkins himself. He mentions how the executive producers of the series *Ghost Whisperer* when faced with a scheduling problem (the series is broadcast Friday nights, which is an inauspicious time slot in the United States), had the idea of creating 'total engagement' from the audience by means of a website that 'describes key events in the series from the point of view' of one of the characters, 'helping to draw viewers to the series every week' (Jenkins 2013: 19).<sup>3</sup>

These studies are of particular interest to anyone who is interested in the ways in which audiences can be involved in urban planning. It leads us to wonder whether increasing the number of media that narrativize the conception of a plan reflects a communication logic that seeks to increase influence and legitimize framing or rather a desire to involve different audiences in the planning process. The answer we subscribe to is more balanced. More often than not, the institutional communication strategy and greater public participation come together without necessarily excluding each other. One contributes to the other and vice versa. Communication is never just communication; it also reflects a desire to give more information to audiences of urban policies in order to involve them, and encourage them to take part or take an interest, as citizens, in forthcoming urban developments.

In this sense, the approach proposed here differs from the studies that have looked at the diversity of media used in territorial-marketing or property-development strategies (Ward 1998). The aim is not so much to disseminate representations in support of an imaginary that leads to a decision to locate or make a purchase, as to emulate a world that is favourable to the development of ordinary creativity. Indeed, the premise is that, within a communication device, the space reserved for deploying users' creativity will create and retain audiences. The latter will become all the more involved in this device if they help with its deployment. The goal is engagement with the device rather than dissemination of a promotional message.

This point also makes it possible to distinguish the transmedia storytelling approach from studies that have looked at the diversity of media employed to recruit and train residents as part of community planning experiences (Grant 2009; Gordon and Virginillo 2022). The approach proposed here attempts to show how the techniques and formats mobilized to communicate a development plan to the general public gradually diverge from themes and tools used in urban planning and design. The challenge is to get ever wider audiences on board by means of attractors, which help to involve, educate and identify individuals who are likely to participate, as residents, in the making of future plans.

## **DESCRIBING AND INTERPRETING A LONG-TERM STRATEGY FOR COMMUNICATING AN URBAN PLAN**

The communication, information, consultation and public-participation initiatives pursued as part of the Canton of Geneva's cantonal planning are an interesting opportunity to describe the successive changes that lead from a strategy to promote major projects to creating an experiential device that tends to diversify formats in a bid to create audiences.

Delivered by Intellect to:

Guest (guest)

IP: 195.176.241.246

On: Thu, 08 Jan 2026 11:37:56

In Swiss development law, the goal of a Cantonal Master Plan is to coordinate activities that have spatial implications for a period of twenty to 25 years. Generally speaking, a master plan is mainly developed within the public administration. In Geneva, it is managed by a Service du Plan directeur ('Master Plan Department'), but the multiannual process mobilizes many other technical departments. Its final stages involve the public in the broad sense of the term, particularly when it is (1) submitted to a public consultation and (2) voted on in the cantonal parliament. These two stages are compulsory by law.

The stage of public consultation on the 2030 Master Plan (in force to this day, although the production of the 2050 Master Plan is well underway), which was conducted in 2011, marked a turning point in the way public communication processes were managed. Taking place in the context of a housing crisis, the consultation was highly publicized. For part of the population, the master plan became a means to challenge the economic promotion policy pursued by the political authorities. Indeed, this is one of Europe's most dynamic regions (UBS 2021). The resulting strong demographic growth is the source of the shortage observed in the real-estate market. A part of the population wondered whether, rather than reclassifying the agricultural zone and increasing current density, would it not be better to slow down economic growth (Figure 3)? The lively debate around this probably explains the high number of comments (544) sent against the first version of the planning document. They augured a heated political debate before the vote in the cantonal parliament.

Consequently, the political authorities developed a communication strategy while also acquiring new communication skills in urban development. A person in charge of promoting major projects was recruited in 2011. The master plan was accompanied by a story for the general public. The text narrativized the intentions of the master plan. It gave concrete expression to the effects of realizing it for the Genevan population, telling how households currently condemned to migrate to neighbouring France or the nearby Canton of Vaud would once again be able to live in Geneva. The plot turned a rediscovered 'desire' (to build, in particular) into a means of restoring equilibrium. First, there was the brochure *Genève, envie* ('Geneva, desire'). Then, various films (2013, 2018) were produced to promote the goals of the Cantonal Master Plan (Matthey et al. 2023). Gradually, new modes of communication and public participation were developed, whose deployment we will examine from 2012 onwards.

To this end, we will draw on several sources of information: (1) a very long-term (ten-year) participatory observation of the conception and organization of an event promoting Genevan urban projects (*La Quinzaine de l'urbanisme*); (2) non-participatory observation of two editions of a device promoting major Genevan urban projects to the general public (the stand of Geneva's Department of Territory at the fair *Les Automnales*); (3) interviews conducted with 21 key witnesses on the ongoing changes in the urban-planning profession at a regional level (Table 1); (4) a documentary analysis of written material (various press releases; legislative programmes between 2010, 2014, 2018 and 2024; Department of Territory roadmaps from 2015 to 2018, 2018 to 2023, 2023 to 2024; *La Quinzaine* programmes of events; *Explore* and *Les Rencontres du développement*; Urban Planning Commission reports between 2011, 2014 and 2018), graphics (photos taken by the authors and images found on Instagram), film (*Explore la ville Genève*) and other materials produced for the website of *Explore* – a festival of the city of tomorrow organized by the public authorities.



Figure 3: Reducing size to save the agricultural zone. Source: the vote on reclassifying the Cherpines agricultural zone is emblematic of this quarrel over growth. The coalition opposed to it (ranging from the populist right to the far left) saw demographic growth as a reason for the unsustainability of Geneva’s urban development and called for slower economic growth. Almost twelve years later, this call was reflected in the stance taken by the state counsellor in charge of development, for whom it was necessary ‘to moderate [economic growth] and favour local SMEs’ (Antonio Hodgers on Radio Lac Matin, 16 February 2023). (Figure 3 is taken from Drompt 2022: 65.)

Table 1: Synopsis of interviews.

Interviewees	Number
Executives, private agencies	10
Executives, public administration	4
Employees, public administration	1
Executives, research institute	3
Retired executives, research institute	3
	21

These materials have been subjected to a hermeneutic analysis (in the sense of interpreting them). The interpretation here needs to be seen as an attempt to reconstruct actors’ intentions by comparing testimonies and ‘archives’. This hermeneutic approach is justified by the fact that our goal is

not to measure but to understand. We are trying to examine the gradual emergence of what we could call a new urban planning culture where communication and public participation converge. This choice of explanatory approach translates into a reconstruction mode that uses a form – adapted to planning studies – of ethnographic description (Laplantine [1996] 2000), in the sense of a description–explanation (Jablonka [2014] 2017).

### **FROM PUBLIC RELATIONS TO THE FESTIVAL OF THE CITY OF TOMORROW: CONVEYING THE 2030 CANTONAL MASTER PLAN**

The version of the 2030 Cantonal Master Plan (PDCn 2030) submitted to public consultation in 2011 identified several major projects. These were zones where the existing construction potential, the development of transport routes and the density of the surrounding urban fabric justified future urbanization. Among these zones, one could potentially act as a showcase for the political intentions embodied in the PDCn: the Praille–Acacias–Vernets (PAV) project. The latter aimed to transform a 230-hectare industrial area that was still in operation. In the early 2010s, when the project was still being sketched (the master plan had not yet been produced), it gave rise to a series of controversies which partly echoed those around the Cantonal Master Plan. The jobs-housing ratio was hotly debated. The municipalities involved in this major project lobbied to have a large park included in the district master plan. The construction of tower blocks, devoted to services (banks, insurance companies, etc.), caused concern. For the most impatient, PAV had also become emblematic of a ‘difficulty to build in Geneva’ (architect and agency manager), even though there was a real ‘housing emergency’ (according to the slogan of the Genevan Real Estate Chamber).

#### ***Public relations as a communication model***

Communication was one of the methods deployed to resolve some of the emerging tensions. At first, ordinary forms of communication were used, which nevertheless made it possible to experiment with various ways to ‘meet people’ (communication specialist and cantonal administration). Running exhibitions was one such experiment. The aim of the ‘PAV, le point’ (‘Update on PAV’) exhibitions, organized beginning with 2011, was to inform citizens and professionals by mainly visual but also playful means (Figure 4). They sought to report on the progress of the process at a steady but not-too-fast pace. Indeed, the person in charge of communications for the major projects was convinced that there was no point in talking too often about a project unless there was something new to communicate. Otherwise, it could be perceived by the message recipients as ‘propaganda’ (communication specialist, cantonal administration).

Modestly designed, these exhibitions prefigured more sophisticated productions staged for project zones other than PAV. They showcased the techniques used by the public authorities to give access to information or help better understand the development issues at stake. These ranged from low to high-tech, depending on whether mock-ups or tablets were used to visualize the forms that upcoming urbanization ideas would take. They could also be ordered along an axis that describes the forms of persuasion used, such as transposing discourses (information boards) or providing immersive narratives (3D virtual-reality headsets simulating the sounds of the future district).



Figure 4a: 'Le PAV, le point', 2013. Source: Matthey (2013).

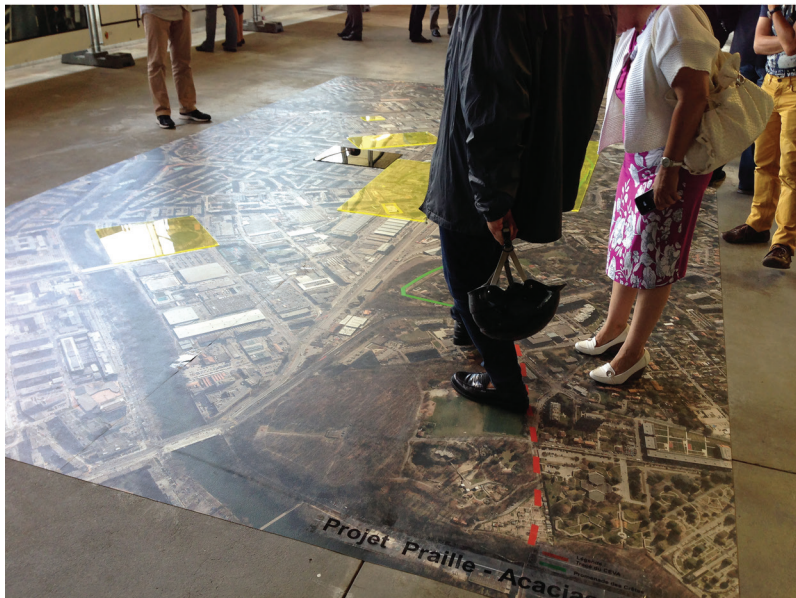


Figure 4b: 'Le PAV, le point', 2013. Source: Matthey (2013).

The presence of Geneva's Département du territoire ('Department of Territory') at the fair *Les Automnales* represented an important moment in the integration of these techniques into a scenery (Figure 4). The justification for its presence was again related to a communication model stemming from public relations. The administration seemed to have gradually understood

the importance of being present not only at shows reserved for real-estate professionals, such as the *Marché international des professionnels de l'immobilier* (MIPI) in Cannes, but also at fairs for the general public, which allowed it to reach the real clients of planning, the end consumers who were the future inhabitants of the major projects (executive, cantonal administration). *Les Automnales*, which was open to all economic sectors in a spirit of 'conviviality and authenticity' (show's website), was an event entirely suited to this purpose. It provided an opportunity to reach people who often knew nothing about Geneva's planning projects (executive, cantonal administration). Walking around the show, this public, who was unlikely to attend a specialized exhibition, could discover ongoing projects at a dedicated stand. It could even experience them since corporeality was an important dimension of the scenery (Figure 5). The latter took the form of various explanatory boards, a mock-up of the project, simulation games and orthophotographs enhanced by the use of tablets.

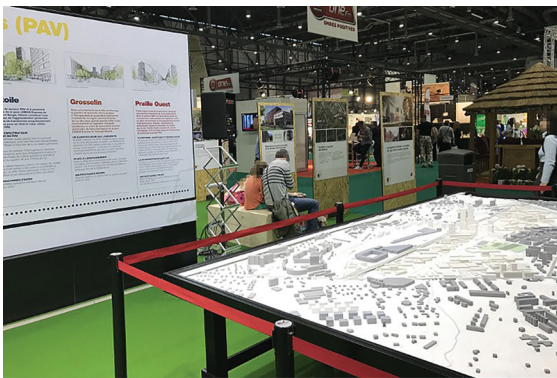


Figure 5a: Stand of Geneva's Department of Territory at the 2016 Les Automnales. Source: Matthey (2016).



Figure 5b: Stand of Geneva's Department of Territory at the 2016 Les Automnales. Source: Matthey (2016).



Figure 5c: Stand of Geneva's Department of Territory at the 2016 Les Automnales. Source: Matthey (2016).

The organization of this annual event was part of a communication strategy that drew on the public-relations model, with relations taking centre stage. Interaction methods that engaged body states rather than the passive consumption of information were favoured. There was, however, a shift towards a more event-based regime in the communication around the master plan and its major projects. By event-based regime, we mean a way of communicating that organizes specifically chosen moments, which are part of a defined calendar and are more often than not meant to be repeated regularly.

### **Experimenting with new forms of communication**

*La Quinzaine genevoise de l'urbanisme* ('Geneva's fortnight of urbanism'), organized since 2014, was part of this event-based regime. Run annually on the initiative of the public administration; this event allows local residents to learn about the development of the Geneva region. The organizing committee – made up of state departments, professional associations, organizations devoted to promoting an urban culture, and training institutions – is charged with developing a programme of activities. The latter have taken various forms, with initially standard events (exhibitions, conferences, round tables and seminars) becoming more participatory in nature (visits, workshops, serious games, etc.) to reach a wider public (Figure 6). These activities have revolved around a specific theme, usually chosen in connection with a political or administrative agenda, such as, to cite just a few titles: 'Major projects for Geneva', 'Building the city by keeping our lands', 'The art of city building', 'Renewing public spaces', 'Neighbourhood banquet' or 'Planet Limit'.

*La Quinzaine* has become an important moment in what French speakers call the regional *fabrique urbaine* or 'urban production' (i.e., all the political, economic, practical and symbolic operations that contribute to the material production of a city). It allows heterogeneous actors to meet, whether as part of an organizing committee or the event's various activities. The latter provides opportunities to disseminate information about ongoing projects, participate in the creation of a general planning culture, as well as narrate the changes undergone by the Genevan region.

Delivered by Intellect to:

Guest (guest)

IP: 195.176.241.246

On: Thu, 08 Jan 2026 11:37:56



Figure 6a: La Quinzaine de l'urbanisme: attempting to broaden audiences from professionals to children to social work. Source: Matthey (2014, 2021, 2022).



Figure 6b: La Quinzaine de l'urbanisme: attempting to broaden audiences from professionals to children to social work. Source: Matthey (2021).



Figure 6c: La Quinzaine de l'urbanisme: attempting to broaden audiences from professionals to children to social work. Source: Matthey (2022).

However, *La Quinzaine* has been criticized. Some local activists see it as the ‘Council of State’s communication tool’ (member, residents’ association). There have even been criticisms from within the administration itself, which crystallize around an observation coming in the form of a slogan: ‘It Is a Fortnight of Urbanists Not Urbanism’, concluded some people within the administration (executive, cantonal administration). Its audience is made up primarily of professionals; therefore, it fails to interest the general public. The event needs to be opened up to less specific, more ‘festive’ activities in order to produce a ‘narrative’ (employee, cantonal administration).

### **Events at the service of a new contributive culture**

This internal criticism led to the creation of a new event. Called *Explore*, it sought to offer a more attractive programme to people who did not already have an interest in the city and the changes it underwent. Its organizers subscribed to a new culture of ‘contribution’ (employee, cantonal administration) that mobilized an ethic of doing, which was seen as a vector for sharing. It was by focusing on constructing situations where audiences could ‘do things together’ (employee, cantonal administration) that organizers hoped to strengthen public participation in urban planning.

At first, the event was in overt competition with *La Quinzaine*. Its first edition was organized at the same time as the by-now established fixture and had its own graphic identity and specific publicity campaign. It then found a complementary place in the public authorities’ communication strategy by becoming a ‘festival of the city of tomorrow’, as indicated by the event’s new subtitle. The festival was an extension of the previous event-based approach but with an added dimension. As well as communicating, the aim was to encourage participation in the broad sense of the term. Thus, at the first edition held in 2018, the public was invited to a ‘collective’ ‘urban experience’ of ‘emblematic spaces’ (to quote the presentation video). A ‘musical aperitif’ was on offer, followed by a ‘concert’ in a disused factory. The second day started with a ‘people’s big brunch’, while children could join in a ‘life-size snakes and ladders game’. The afternoon was reserved for various workshops aimed at specific audiences: a ‘housing cooperative forum’, ‘urban permaculture workshop’, ‘bike repair workshop’, another on ‘making skates’ (event presentation video) and so on (Figure 7).

These activities slightly widened the range of techniques used to talk about urban projects. The jazz concert, theatre show and artists’ residencies joined mock-up workshops for children [...] These elements helped write the city, which also happened to be the theme of the 2016 *La Quinzaine de l’urbanisme*, titled *Lire et écrire la ville* (‘Reading and Writing the City’).

Subsequent editions would refine this device by linking it more specifically to a place or theme relevant to the political agenda of the Council of State or the current state of Genevan urban planning. For example, in 2019, the theme was the ‘mobility of tomorrow’, echoing the extension of a tramline. *Explore* thus became a vehicle for the general public, which explicitly sought to ‘give narrative form’ to the *fabrique urbaine* through activities that had a strong potential for imagining local areas: a theatre show and improvisations that allowed ‘citizens’ narratives’ to be collected (FMR 2020).

The event was the final stage in the spontaneous implementation of a device that mobilized various media and formats in order to put across the intentions of the 2030 Cantonal Master Plan and the significance of the major

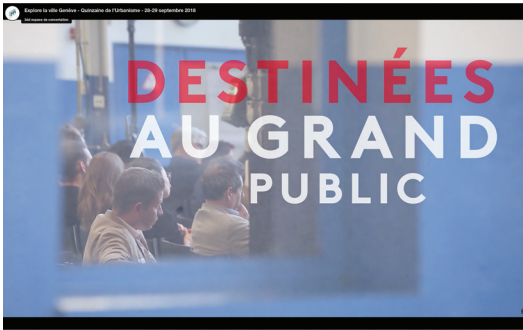


Figure 7a: Explore la ville: city making through the event. Source: screenshot of film Explore la ville Genève, 28–29 September 2018 <https://vimeo.com/313120064>, accessed 28 March 2023.



Figure 7b: Explore la ville Genève: city making through the event. Source: Matthey (2023).



Figure 7c: Explore la ville Genève: city making through the event. Source: Matthey (2023).

projects it proposed. The communication around the master plan was increasingly participatory in nature since, in 2015, public participation became a legal requirement for district development plans.

This device, which sought to both communicate and encourage participation, would become a strategic axis of the *Vision territoriale transfrontalière*

(‘Cross-border territorial vision’) (currently being formulated at the time of writing) on which the future (2050) Cantonal Master Plan should be based. The roadmap published by the public administration underscores the importance of the *Explore* festival in strengthening participation (‘Key consultation events will be organized in the local areas, drawing on travelling devices, such as the *Explore* festival, to invite the population to reflect on the issues at stake in the development and ecological transition of the Genevan region. *Explore* engages the population in creating the city of tomorrow through events, consultations, and calls for project’). The more general role of events as a means of persuasion is also reaffirmed (‘festive events organised across the conurbation [such as festivals, the Geneva festival reinvented and events around Léman Express stations] provide opportunities which may well be worth seizing. Such devices can help construct a unifying narrative related to reviewing the PDCn and fostering a sense of belonging’).

Thus, the model that comes out of this long-term description seems very similar to the figure below (Figure 8).

Many techniques have been deployed to communicate the intentions of the Cantonal Master Plan. More technical and discursive formats (political speeches, Council of State’s roadmap, technical sheets, etc.) persist, being aimed at a narrower audience (executive, cantonal administration). However, techniques attempting to give a narrative form – for which the brochure ‘Genève, envie’ is the template – to the plan and its various projects seem to proliferate. They also tend to be deployed in ways typical of a contributory economy, which values doing. It is by experiencing that the master plan’s recipients are invited to get involved in the world conceived by its authors. The similarity with what is being theorized in the fields of media theory and literary studies justifies our going into a more substantial discussion of the implementation of this device, particularly from the perspective of planning practice.

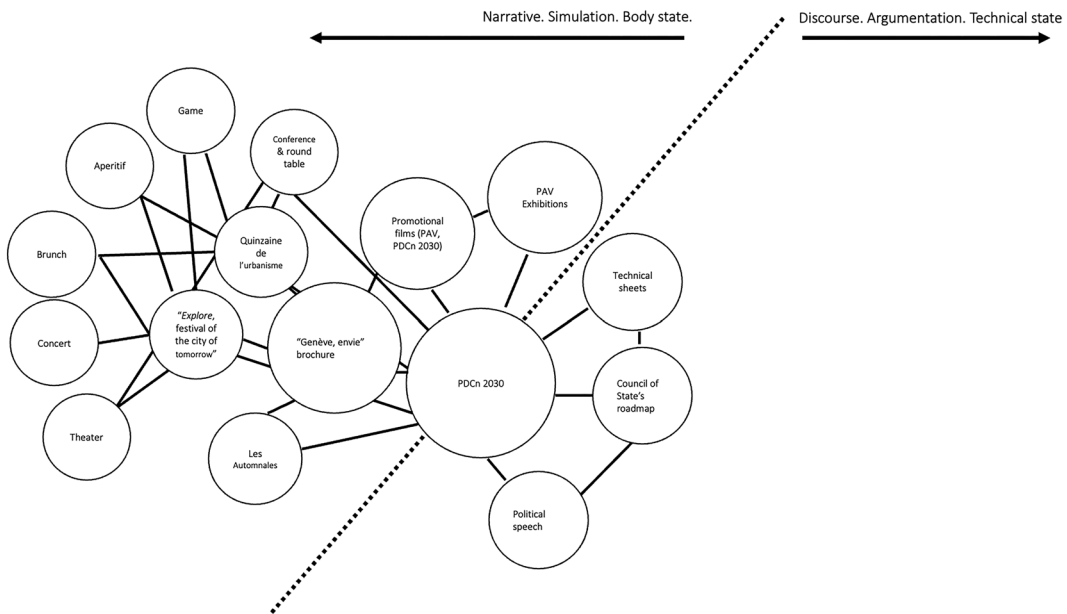


Figure 8: A Device Aggregating Various Communication-Participation Formats. Source: Matthey (2023).

## WHEN CONTROL PREVAILS OVER ORDINARY CREATIVITY: THE INCOMPLETENESS OF A DEVICE

A device is thus developed through successive aggregation, which is similar to what is being theorized in relation to transmedia storytelling. Different methods are employed to tell the story of the Cantonal Master Plan, dealing with elements specific to a plot (the desire to live and, therefore, to build, project zones, increasing density, etc.). Nevertheless, it is adaptations in Ryan's sense mentioned above rather than narrative extensions that are proposed. In each of these adaptations ('Genève, envie' brochure, PAV exhibitions, *Les Automnales* stand, *La Quinzaine genevoise de l'urbanisme*, *Explore* festival, etc.), a given narrator (the state) tells the same story as the plan in a different form. Envisaging other possible stories, and deepening one's knowledge about a 'given world' (Geneva in 2030, or in 2050 in the case of the plan currently being produced) is not offered as a possibility. And it is precisely the ability to gain deeper knowledge about a story world that is the strength of transmedia storytelling in the cultural industry.

It is probably one of the reasons why this device, although it helps to disseminate an urbanistic culture and render visible contemporary issues pertaining to Genevan urban projects, nevertheless struggles to increase interest in this particular cultural production that is the making of a Cantonal Master Plan (see in this sense the results of the survey that Hausser [2023] conducted on the use of civic tech in the Canton of Geneva). Obviously, planning is not a mass cultural product (albeit its effects are). It would likely (and regrettably) be unrealistic to aspire to create communities of 'fans' fighting over the right interpretation of a plot point. But we can at least aspire to turn the development of plans into a mass cultural product, if only because democracy is at stake.

Thus, three lessons can be drawn from this case study of a communication-participation device that engages in transmedia storytelling in all but name. The device under observation is self-engendered through the creativity of various institutional actors involved in Geneva's planning. The prevailing hyper-empiricism leads to the effectiveness of an event being conceived in terms of a general goal: helping the public to better understand the objectives of the Cantonal Master Plan as embodied in various projects. The organizers are aware of how the techniques they employ determine ways of doing and audiences. The techniques are thus clearly identified in relation to the script, which defines practices. *However, a transmedia device cannot limit itself only to these interactions* (called internal in Ryan's typology mentioned above) *except when attempting to control reception*.

Initially deployed based on a strategy of promoting major urban projects intended to help operationalize the Cantonal Master Plan, the participatory communication device engendered through the actions of various actors is apparently little thought through in terms of its external interactions. In media theory, the latter refers to the choice that 'fans' have (in our case, inhabitants, seen as the Plan's end recipients) among the documents provided by the media system. While there are many events – all different means to experience a given world – the information disseminated is overall redundant. The formats used are different ways of telling the same story rather than accessing new elements. According to some organizers, this is one of the reasons for the relative failure of the device as a whole. The 'mothership' of the Cantonal Master Plan is, in a sense, too present in the communication-participation

undertaken. This omnipresence hampers the dissemination of the plan as a product of mass cultural consumption. *A transmedia device needs to vary the 'documents' it provides to the public, taking into account the alternative viewpoints they make it possible to develop.*

The limited nature of external interactions due to the low diversity of the alternative documents provided translates into rather limited productive interactions. There are very few traces of interactions left by 'fans'. And it is these traces of ordinary creativity that ultimately foster their engagement with the consumption of the cultural product. The self-engendered device examined does not encourage the emergence of autonomous interpretative communities – communities that would take it upon themselves to propose other ways of reading and telling the ongoing story. Thus, its ripple effect is very limited. To put it otherwise, the communication-participation device engendered remains mainly a communication-promotion device, which directs rather than stimulates the imagination. In this sense, it stems from a desire to control reception rather than open up, without any restrictions, possible ways of debating projects.

These three lessons, presented here from the standpoint of the actors' assumed intentions, are one of the monograph's possible contributions to the field of urban and cultural studies. While generally speaking, current academic literature tends to approach the use of narrative and storytelling in development from contrasting perspectives (they are either a democratic tool or an instrument of power), the case study proposed here tends to be more ambiguous. Transmedia storytelling pursues a variety of goals. It seeks, at one and the same time, to inform (this is where we are going to build), to adapt communication to the expectations of a political project (increasing the city's population density serves the interests of Geneva's inhabitants), and, finally, to involve various audiences (from the youths interested primarily in skateboarding to the already engaged actors who will come to a round table devoted to cooperative housing in Geneva's major projects in order to inform themselves). Our study is thus opening up new research avenues. This includes finding out what makes a device tip towards information, control or the power to act. In the previous three paragraphs, we have tried to lay out the minimum conditions that seem to us likely to converge with the last goal.

But the research agenda could equally develop towards an analysis of story worlds produced by narrating urban plans or projects. This would involve showing how different media and/or formats interact to convey fragments of a given world, reinforcing the main narrative (the mothership) or attenuating it by producing divergent fictions. This agenda could target the 'translations' that occur during the elaboration of a transmedia narrative, while the shift from one format to another, one medium to another, opens up new possibilities and imposes new constraints. Finally, it could look at the audiences of these devices, trying to grasp the different 'cultures' involved in order to better understand how they engage in communicating urban plans and projects, whether by helping to develop them or working to extend them.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this contribution has been to help develop a new model of the use of storytelling in planning. Looking at publications specifically devoted to the question of storytelling (and not those interested in the stories told by plans, nor those that attempt to show the narrativity or poetics inherent in plans), we

Delivered by Intellect to:

Guest (guest)

IP: 195.176.241.246

On: Thu, 08 Jan 2026 11:37:56

identified two opposed currents – one that sees storytelling as a democratizing tool, the other an instrument of power – and tried to show that communication and public participation do not exclude each other, but rather tend to become a hybrid. Transmedia storytelling, as theorized in the fields of media and literary studies, provides here an interesting perspective. This model, which leaves room for the creativity of ordinary audiences as they take ownership of cultural contents, also has the advantage of not erasing the dissymmetry of power relations between the various actors in the cultural system studied.

In this context, we have looked at the decade-long implementation of a communication device for the benefit of a Genevan Cantonal Master Plan and the various projects included in it. Our analysis tends to show that planning professionals sometimes engage in transmedia storytelling without knowing it, that is, without calling it that. Around the core, which is the Cantonal Master Plan, various formats have been developed that complement rather than compete with each other and take turns telling the story of the master plan. All these formats act as extensions that convey the messages of a ‘mother-ship’: they help acquire information, experience situations and playfully contribute to ‘the city of the future’. This deployment has been stimulated by a desire to diversify the audiences reached by the different events. The aim has been to get more people involved. However, public participation has remained qualitatively weak. Thus, both so-called external and productive interactions have been limited, whereas internal reactions have been thought through and foreseen. This is probably due to a device that is too unilaterally orientated, turning it into a machine for adapting the plan’s narrative-message to different contexts rather than increasing the number of alternative situations narrating the future of a given area.

However, transmedia storytelling could be a useful tool in the making of plans, offering undeniable potentialities for practitioners. We cannot help but dream of a participatory communication device which, while explaining the main ideas of a master plan, would also provide elements in support of a territorial diagnosis so as to foster alternative forms of expertise, encouraging, through forums, the creation of interpretative communities engaged in the production of alternative scenarios, which a subsequent version of the plan would try to consider. Let us dream of citizens acting as fans of a long-running series comprised of these Plans, which are mass cultural products if only because they affect us in our ordinary lives by proposing fiction about a possible world.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The authors thank Monica Biberson for translating this article from French into English and revising the final version.

## **ETHICAL STATEMENT**

No data relating to political opinions, religious beliefs or personal and intimate matters were collected in the course of this research. The data used in this article were collected before the creation of the University of Geneva’s Commission for Ethical Research (CUREG) and were therefore not subject to its evaluation. However, the data were collected in accordance with the ethical principles governing research in the social sciences. Throughout the data collection process, all participants were informed of the research objectives and their implications. They were also made aware of how they might be

quoted (if applicable) and of their right to change their statements. Finally, they gave explicit and free consent for the use of the material collected. The management of research data – including storage, access and confidentiality – was approved by the public funder of this research, the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF), as part of the project's data management plan (<https://data.snf.ch/grants/grant/189881>).

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

## FUNDING

This research was made possible through a grant from the Swiss National Science Foundation (IZCOZO\_189881).

## REFERENCES

- Ameel, Lieven (2016), 'Towards a narrative typology of urban planning narratives for, in and of planning in Jätkäsaari, Helsinki', *Urban Design International*, 22:4, pp. 318–30, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41289-016-0030-8>.
- Ameel, Lieven (2021), *The Narrative Turn in Urban Planning: Plotting the Helsinki Waterfront*, London and New York: Routledge.
- Aravot, Iris (1995), 'Narrative-myth and urban design', *Journal of Architectural Education*, 49:2, pp. 79–91, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10464883.1995.10734670>.
- Arpin, Isabelle, Mounet, Coralie and Geoffroy, David (2015), 'Inventaires naturalistes et rééducation de l'attention. Le cas des jardiniers de Grenoble', *Études rurales*, 195, pp. 89–108, <https://doi.org/10.4000/etudesrurales.10622>.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail ([1984] 2004), 'Le roman d'apprentissage dans l'histoire du réalisme?', in M. Bakhtin (ed.), *Esthétique de la création verbale*, Paris: Gallimard, pp. 211–61.
- Broadhead, Jacqueline (2018), 'Building an inclusive city narrative: Briefing note', *Learning and Reflections from Inclusive Cities: A Workshop on Strategic Communications and Narrative*, Oxford, 16 April.
- Bulkens, Maartje, Minca, Claudio and Muzaini, Hamzah (2015), 'Storytelling as method in spatial planning', *European Planning Studies*, 23:11, pp. 2310–26, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09654313.2014.942600>.
- Childs, Mark C. (2008), 'Storytelling and urban design', *Journal of Urbanism: International Research on Placemaking and Urban Sustainability*, 1:2, pp. 173–86, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17549170802221526>.
- Cohen, Philip (2008), 'Stuff happens: Telling the story and doing the business in the making of Thames Gateway', in P. Cohen and M. J. Rustin (eds), *London's Turning: Thames Gateway: Prospects and Legacy*, Aldershot: Ashgate, pp. 99–124.
- Dionne, Caroline (2018), 'We build spaces with words: Spatial agency, recognition and narrative', in A. Sioli and Y. Jung (eds), *Reading Architecture: Literary Imagination and Architectural Experience*, London: Routledge, pp. 157–70.
- Duranel, Guillaume (2019), 'Les conventions de l'Architecture au prisme du dispositif du Grand Paris', doctoral dissertation, Paris: Conservatoire national des arts et métiers (CNAM).
- Ernwein, Marion and Matthey, Laurent (2019), 'Events in the affective city: Affect, attention and alignment in two ordinary urban events', *Environment*

- and *Planning A: Economy and Space*, 51:2, pp. 283–301, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518x18757509>.
- Filep, Crystall, Thomson-Fawcett, Michelle and Murray, Rae (2014), 'Built narratives', *Journal of Urban Design*, 19:3, pp. 298–16, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13574809.2014.890043>.
- Fischer, Frank (2009), 'Discursive planning: Social justice as discourse', in P. Marcuse, J. Connolly, J. Novy, I. Olivo, C. Potter and J. Steil (eds), *Searching for the Just City: Debates in Urban Theory and Practice*, London: Routledge, pp. 52–71.
- Fischer, Frank and Forester, John (eds) (1993), *The Argumentative Turn in Policy Analysis and Planning*, London: Duke University Press.
- Fischler, Raphaël (2000), 'Communicative planning theory: A Foucauldian assessment', *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 19:4, pp. 358–68, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0739456x0001900405>.
- FMR Agence (2020), *Les Marronniers, projet de nouveau quartier au Grand-Saconnex: Récits citoyens*, Geneva: République et canton de Genève.
- Gordon, David L. A. and Virginillo, Miranda (2022), 'Evaluating the impact of the community planning association of Canada in the post-war revival of Canadian planning', *International Planning History Society Proceedings*, 19:1, pp. 391–406, <https://doi.org/10.7480/iph.2022.1.6501>.
- Grant, Jill L. (2009), 'Experiential planning: A practitioner's account of Vancouver's success', *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 75:3, pp. 358–70, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01944360902965875>.
- Hastings, Annette (1999), 'Discourse and urban change: Introduction to the special issue', *Urban Studies*, 36:1, pp. 7–12, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0042098993691>.
- Hausser, Armelle Loreline (2023), 'Participation citoyenne et numérique: Les civic tech: de nouveaux dispositifs pour planifier le territoire?', doctoral dissertation, Lausanne: École polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne.
- Healey, Patsy (1992), 'Planning through debate: The communicative turn in planning theory', *The Town Planning Review*, 63:2, pp. 143–249, <https://doi.org/10.3828/tpr.63.2.422x602303814821>.
- Hodgers, Antonio (2023), interviewed by B. Rule, *Radio Lac Matin*, Radio Lac, Geneva, 16 February, <https://www.radiolac.ch/podcasts/6-minutes-avec-16022023-0735-075644/>. Accessed 1 March 2025.
- Huang, Huei-yu (2022), 'Le transmédia storytelling en classe de français langue étrangère: Le cas de la réécriture de la bande dessinée numérique 2 sur book creator', *Revue de recherches en littérature médiatique multimodale*, 16, pp. 1–27, <https://doi.org/10.7202/1096909ar>.
- Irazábal, Clara (2009), 'Realizing planning's emancipatory promise: Learning from regime theory to strengthen communicative action', *Planning Theory*, 8:2, pp. 115–39, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1473095209102230>.
- Jablonka, Ivan ([2014] 2017), *L'Histoire est une littérature contemporaine: Manifeste pour les sciences sociales*, Paris: Seuil.
- Jacobs, Keith (2006), 'Discourse analysis and its utility for urban policy research', *Urban Policy and Research*, 24:1, pp. 39–52, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08111140600590817>.
- Jenkins, Henry (2006 [2003]), *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, New York: New York University Press.
- Jenkins, Henry (2010), 'Transmedia storytelling and entertainment: An annotated syllabus', *Continuum*, 24:6, pp. 943–58, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2010.510599>.

- Jenkins, Henry (2013), 'La licorne origami contre-attaque', *Terminal*, 112, pp. 11–28, <https://doi.org/10.4000/terminal.455>.
- Jenkins, Henry, Lashley, Mark C. and Creech, Brian (2017), 'Voices for a new vernacular: A forum on digital storytelling: Interview with Henry Jenkins', *International Journal of Communication*, 11, pp. 1061–68.
- Jensen, Ole (2007), 'Culture stories: Understanding cultural urban branding', *Planning Theory*, 6:3, pp. 211–36, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1473095207082032>.
- Keunen, Bart and Verraest, Sofie (2012), 'Tell-tale landscapes and mythical chronotopes in urban designs for twenty-first century Paris', *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, 14:3, <https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.2038>.
- Kustritz, Anne (2017), 'Interactivité, resémantisation, et plaisirs de la primauté ontologique: Les œuvres de fans comme centre du récit', *Revue française des sciences de l'information et de la communication*, 10, pp. 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.4000/rfsic.2672>.
- Lambelet, Sébastien (2019), *Régimes urbains 2.0: gouverner les villes suisses du 21e siècle*, doctoral dissertation, Geneva: Université de Genève.
- Laplantine, François ([1996] 2000), *La Description ethnographique*, Paris: Nathan.
- Mandelbaum, Seymour J. (1991), 'Telling stories', *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 10:3, pp. 209–14, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0739456x9101000308>.
- Matthey, Laurent (2011), 'Urbanisme fictionnel: l'action urbaine à l'heure de la société du spectacle', *Métropolitiques*, <https://metropolitiques.eu/Urbanisme-fictionnel-l-action.html>. Accessed 20 May 2025.
- Matthey, Laurent (2014a), *Building up stories: Sur l'action urbanistique à l'heure de la société du spectacle intégré*, Geneva: A-Type.
- Matthey, Laurent, Ambal, Julie, Gaberell, Simon and Cogato-Lanza, Elena (2023), 'The empire of the narrative: Plan making through the prism of classical and postclassical narratologies', *Planning Theory*, 22:3, pp. 292–15, <https://doi.org/10.1177/14730952221125174>.
- McAdams, Mindy (2016), 'Transmedia storytelling', *World Journalism Education Congress*, Auckland, 14–16 July.
- Olsen, Kristian (2017), 'Talk to the hand: Strategic spatial planning as persuasive storytelling of the Loop City', *European Planning Studies*, 25:6, pp. 978–93, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09654313.2017.1296936>.
- Ortiz, Catalina (2022), 'Storytelling otherwise: Decolonising storytelling in planning', *Planning Theory*, 22:2, pp. 177–200, <https://doi.org/10.1177/14730952221115875>.
- Ortiz, Catalina and Millan, Gynna (2019), 'Transmedia storytelling: Activating urban learning for slum upgrading', The Bartlett Development Planning Unit Blog, 9 May, <https://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/dpublog/2019/05/09/transmedia-storytelling-activating-urban-learning-for-slum-upgrading/>. Accessed 10 March 2023.
- Ouvrard, Pauline (2016), 'Le nouvel esprit de l'urbanisme, entre scènes et coulisses: Une ethnographie de la fabrique du territoire de Saint-Nazaire à Nantes', doctoral dissertation, Nantes: Université de Nantes.
- Peltola, Taru and Tuomisaari, Johanna (2015), 'Making a difference: Forest biodiversity, affective capacities, and the micro-politics of expert fieldwork', *Geoforum*, 64, pp. 1–11, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2015.05.013>.
- Purcell, Mark (2009), 'Resisting neoliberalization: Communicative planning or counter-hegemonic movements?', *Planning Theory*, 8:2, pp. 140–65, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1473095209102232>.

- Rannila, Päivi and Loivaranta, Tikli (2015), 'Planning as dramaturgy: Agonistic approaches to spatial enactment', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 39:4, pp. 788–806, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.12214>.
- République et canton de Genève (2013) 'PAV: Le Point 2013', 26 August, <https://www.ge.ch/document/pav-point-2013>. Accessed 1 March 2025.
- République et canton de Genève (2018), 'L'aménagement du territoire en cinq clips', Republic and Canton of Geneva Website, 29 November, <https://www.ge.ch/actualite/amenagement-du-territoire-cinq-clips-29-11-2018>. Accessed 1 March 2025.
- Ryan, Marie-Laure (2013), 'Transmedial storytelling and transfictionality', *Poetics Today*, 34:3, pp. 361–88, <https://doi.org/10.1215/03335372-2325250>.
- Ryan, Marie-Laure (2015), 'Transmedia storytelling: Industry buzzword or new narrative experience storyworlds', *Journal of Narrative Studies*, 7:2, pp. 1–19, <https://doi.org/10.5250/storyworlds.7.2.0001>.
- Ryan, Marie-Laure (2016), 'Transmedia narratology and transmedia storytelling', *Artnodes*, 18, pp. 37–46, <https://doi.org/10.7238/a.v0i18.3049>.
- Ryan, Marie-Laure (2018), 'Sur les fondements théoriques de la narratologie transmédiée', in S. Patron (ed.), *Introduction à la narratologie postclassique: Les nouvelles directions de la recherche sur le récit*, Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses universitaires du Septentrion, pp. 147–66.
- Sandercock, Leonie (2003), 'Out of the closet: The importance of stories and storytelling in planning practice', *Planning Theory & Practice*, 4:1, pp. 11–28, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1464935032000057209>.
- Sandercock, Leonie (2010), 'From the campfire to the computer: An epistemology of multiplicity and the story turn in planning', in L. Sandercock and G. Attili (eds), *Multimedia Explorations in Urban Policy and Planning*, Berlin: Springer, pp. 17–37.
- Secchi, Bernardo (1984), *Il racconto urbanistico: La politica della casa e del territorio in Italia*, Torino: Einaudi.
- Sharp, Lesley and Richardson, Tim (2001), 'Reflections on Foucauldian discourse analysis in planning and environmental policy research', *Journal of Environmental Policy and Planning*, 3:3, pp. 193–209, <https://doi.org/10.1002/jep.88>.
- Throgmorton, James A. (1992), 'Planning as persuasive storytelling about the future: Negotiating an electric power rate settlement in Illinois', *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 12:1, pp. 17–31, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0739456x9201200103>.
- Throgmorton, James A. (1996), *Planning as Persuasive Storytelling: The Rhetorical Construction of Chicago's Electric Future*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Throgmorton, James A. (2003), 'Planning as persuasive storytelling in the context of "the Network Society"', *Planning Theory*, 2:2, pp. 125–51, <https://doi.org/10.1177/14730952030022003>.
- UBS (2021), *L'indicateur de compétitivité des cantons 2021*, Zurich: UBS Switzerland AG.
- Uyttenhove, Pieter, Keunen, Bart and Ameel, Lieven (2021), *La puissance projective: Intrigue narrative et Projet Urbain*, Genève: MétisPress.
- Van Hulst, Merlijn (2012), 'Storytelling, a model of and a model for planning', *Planning Theory*, 11:3, pp. 299–318, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1473095212440425>.

- Vitalis, Louis and Guéna, François (2017), 'Narrer pour concevoir, concevoir pour narrer: Enjeux épistémologiques croisés', *Revue française des sciences de l'information et de la communication*, 10, <https://doi.org/10.4000/rfsic.2603>.
- Walter, Mareile (2013), 'Making plans-telling stories: Planning in Karlskrona/Sweden 1980–2010', doctoral dissertation, Karlskrona: School of Planning and Media Design and Blekinge Institute of Technology.
- Ward, Stephen (1998), *Selling Places: The Marketing and Promotion of Towns and Cities 1850–2000*, London: Taylor & Francis.

### SUGGESTED CITATION

Matthey, Laurent, Gaberell, Simon, Ambal, Julie and Lanza, Elena Cogato (2025), 'Promoting a master plan by encouraging participation: On the culture of convergence in urban planning', *Journal of Urban Cultural Studies*, 12:1, pp. 119–45, [https://doi.org/10.1386/jucs\\_00098\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/jucs_00098_1)

### CONTRIBUTOR DETAILS

Laurent Matthey is an associate professor at the University of Geneva. His research and teaching, situated at the crossroads of ethnography and literary studies, focus on the political stakes of the narration of the making of cities. He is a member of the Architectures, Ambiances and Urbanités (UMR – AAU) laboratory within the CRESSON team.

Contact: Department of Geography and Environment, Geneva School of Social Sciences, University of Geneva, 66 Boulevard Carl-Vogt, Geneva 1205, Switzerland.

E-mail: [laurent.matthey@unige.ch](mailto:laurent.matthey@unige.ch)

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9435-1666>

Simon Gaberell is an associate professor at the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Western Switzerland (HES-SO). Head of the interdisciplinary urban centre CITÉ-HES-SO Geneva, he conducts research in the field of urban studies, with a particular focus on the socio-spatial policies of urban development and collaborative approaches.

Contact: CITE – HES-SO Geneva, Geneva School of Social Work, Rue des Voisins 30, Geneva 1205, Switzerland.

E-mail: [simon.gaberell@hesge.ch](mailto:simon.gaberell@hesge.ch)

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4190-2732>

Julie Ambal holds a Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Bordeaux and is a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Geneva. Her research focuses on the narration of major contemporary urban projects.

Contact: Department of Geography and Environment, Geneva School of Social Sciences, University of Geneva, 66 Boulevard Carl-Vogt, Geneva 1205, Switzerland.

E-mail: [julie.ambal@nancy.archi.fr](mailto:julie.ambal@nancy.archi.fr)

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-4120-7675>

Elena Cogato Lanza is an adjunct professor at the Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL). Her teaching and research focus on the history of urban planning and contemporary territorial projects.

Contact: Architecture Section, Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL), School of Architecture, Civil and Environmental Engineering, BP 4133, Station 16, Lausanne, Vaud 1015, Switzerland.

E-mail: elena.cogatolanza@epfl.ch

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9095-7812>

Laurent Matthey, Simon Gaberell, Julie Ambal and Elena Cogato Lanza have asserted their right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, to be identified as the authors of this work in the format that was submitted to Intellect Ltd.

---