Chapter 12
Qualitative Analysis of Learning Territorial Planning: The Case of Management of a Local Plan of Territorial Laws in Chile

Christian A. Quinteros Flores
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6145-9347
Universidad de Chile, Chile

ABSTRACT

This chapter addresses the management process of the Regulator Program of Melipilla district in Chile in 1988–2016. Evidence indicates that territorial planning processes are rare in decision-makers, as they are in favor of a technocratic logic focused on quantitative metrics, rather than in qualitative or professional analyses, such as organizational learning. To this end, the qualitative analysis in this study sought to capture the perceptions of some of its actors regarding issues such as citizen participation, technical management, and political management of this instrument. The fieldwork consisted of the application of in-depth interviews of actors involved at different stages of their implementation from a multi-level approach. It is concluded that the process of updates to this planning instrument was strongly associated with political issues with little strategic vision for the future, precarious levels of citizen participation, and an absolute shortage of organizational learnings into the process.

INTRODUCTION

It is hardly known that qualitative processes are developed both for the elaboration of a Regulatory Plan and its updates. From the academy, research institutes, and even public sectors, it has privileged the use of quantitative management indicators, which give an account on certain metrics of the state of development of the territories. It is no coincidence that, in this regard, rankings such as the ‘Territorial Competitiveness Index,’ ‘Open Government Index,’ or the ‘Quality of Life Index,’ among others, have proliferated in Chile lately, which disaggregate territorial development in a series of dimensions. It is
known, currently, that these divisions are arbitrary because quantitative and qualitative aspects coexist. In this sense, it is not possible to dissociate variables such as indicators of buildings increase or the own income of the municipality with more intangible factors political as the will of the respective Mayor or perception or involving of community in this type of public issues.

On the other hand, territorial inequality has burst strongly on to the regional scene through the concern of technicians and politicians about strengthening territorial compensation systems in the allocation of resources, this latter also known as financial decentralization (Irarrázaval et al., 2008). Associated with the above, the concern about theme of competitiveness, a notion of modern management, means that territories must improve their comparative advantages in order to compete not only for access to state resources (as the case in Chile of National Fund of Regional Development FNDR or Municipal Common Fund FCM, between others) but also to compete with other neighboring territories in generating better conditions and attractive to be depositaries of future investments.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this sense, the ordering of the territory has taken an unusual force. According to Gaspar, it has been carried out as a result of the adequacy of the communities to the available terrestrial space (Gaspar, 2000 cited in Ferrao, 2011). However, for authors such as Ferrao, one of the fragilities of territorial systems lives in the fragmentation and lack of dialogue between scientific and professional communities. This demands to offer solutions or alternatives, which do not disappoint the legitimate public, collective, and private interests where participation, dialogue, and communication are fundamental values of the praxis of the territorial order. Idea shared by Senge, as it will see later, which, by the way, comes from another disciplinary area, not precisely concerned about territory issues.

Based on the objective of this study, it is pertinent to ask: What do we know about these planning instrument management processes? Are the different municipal actors responsible for their implementation? Are there explicit negotiations between actors with different interests? Does the local community have any practical impact on them? How much and How do municipal organizations learn from these processes? If so, how and whom do they manage these learnings?

This research arises given the limited information on how public organizations in Chile, in general, and municipalities in particular, learn from the territorial planning processes that they carry out. So, they can hardly recognize efforts and parameters of efficiency or knowledge of good institutional practices, make invisible spaces of creativity and public management innovation that can increase efficiency and quality to these planning processes, whose activation can even take years and enter into true latency processes.

Today, for any public policy in governance contexts, dialogue, and social consensus-building among the various social groups involved in decisions are required. This is accentuated when generating public policies on territorial and regulatory systems in the use of communal land since there is a higher possibility of increased environmental or ecological conflicts. As Martínez-Alier points out, as the economy and population increase, more natural resources are used, and more waste is produced, affecting the sustainability of the territory, emerging concepts such as possible environmental conflicts (Martínez-Alier, 2007).

In the practical sense, the adequate visualization or interests’ differences of detection or territorial vocations detected in the historical negotiation processes of the Communal Regulatory Plans (from here on out PRC) can be considered as accurate predictors of socio-territorial conflicts in the communes.