

The thesis of Bert GEORGE investigates the relation between strategic planning and decision-making in public organizations, based notably on case studies in the Flemish local government and in Flemish pupil guidance centers.

Strategic planning is an accountability instrument

- providing insights on the priorities of an organization;
- and also ensuring that goals and means are balanced in order to define desirable but also feasible strategies for the organization.

It has been argued that strategic plans are static and rigid tools that do not fit the complex, dynamic and adaptive environment of public organizations.

This doctoral thesis looks into two aspects of this complexity: stakeholder participation and organizational behaviour:

- to check if the government/public authorities are citizen-centric and responsive to changing demands and new forms of voicing.
- to understand the human element: Who was involved? Was there room for discussion and debate? How did group processes influence strategic plans and financial documents and reports?

Focusing on micro and macro-level issues, analysing 225 municipal strategic plans, and basing on surveys of over 2000 politicians, decision makers and planning team members, Bert GEORGE's high-quality work offers real insights about how strategic planning has been practiced within public organizations.

Its last chapter (8) presents what practitioners can learn about:

- the role of politics in strategic planning
- the necessity to have flexible and participatory planning
- the optimal composition of the planning team accompanying the process
- and how to bridge the divide between local politics and administration.