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**ARTICLE**

# Temporal Dynamics of Power Distribution in Mobile Urban Co-Policies: A Southern Analytical Framework

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## Abstract

This study proposes an analytical framework for scrutinising the temporal dynamics of power distribution within the mobility of urban co-policies, particularly those that aim to enhance socio-spatial justice. The role of time in shaping power dynamics in the new contexts covered by urban co-policies is central to this analysis. The framework is constructed through a comprehensive literature review and empirical fieldwork on the Lisbon mobile co-policy, called Bairros de Intervenção Prioritária/Zonas de Intervenção Prioritárias, which is supplemented by analysis of participatory and contextual policies across cities within the Com.Unity.Lab Transfer Network. Drawing on theories of policy mobility in the context of Southern epistemologies, the framework underscores the significance of temporal dynamics in the formation of policy outcomes, which highlights the necessity of the continuous assessment of policy intermediary results over time. The proposed framework identifies a gap in the analysis of the mobility of *co-policies* that integrate spatial co-production and co-governance at the neighbourhood scale. Methodologically based on the Southern ethics of inquiry in which time serves as a critical lens through which travelling co-policies are understood, the study offers insights into the need for continuous adaptation with the overarching goal of assessing the extent to which urban co-policies can foster social justice towards fairer cities.

## Keywords

analytical framework; BIP/ZIP; co-policies; policy mobility; power distribution; socio-spatial justice; time

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## 1. Introduction

Urban societies face significant social and spatial inequalities due to disparities in access to resources, services, and opportunities, which result in the experience of poor living conditions by marginalised communities. As a reflection, many urban policies focus on strategies that promote co-production and co-governance to transform cities through socio-spatial justice based on fair power distribution (Goulart & Falanga, 2022; Iaione, 2017). In this regard, co-policies emerge as urban municipal policies that combine urban co-production and co-governance at the neighbourhood level. They enable and facilitate cooperation between citizens and local administrations in qualifying and improving local territories. Concentrating on co-policies in relation to power distribution and socio-spatial justice, this study focuses on the *mobility* of co-policies.

The study proposes an analytical framework for assessing if and how power is equitably distributed over time due to co-policies that promote urban co-production and co-governance. The discussion particularly focuses on one of the European co-policies called Bairros de Intervenção Prioritária/Zonas de Intervenção Prioritárias (BIP/ZIP). BIP/ZIP is an urban public policy that can be classified as a *citizen participation* and/or *territorial cohesion* policy. Originating in the Lisbon municipality in 2010, it offers a comprehensive toolkit that comprises mapping resources, funding mechanisms, task force frameworks, and local development networks. These elements support small-scale, community-led projects in deprived neighbourhoods to enhance quality of life. From 2018 to 2021, the BIP/ZIP initiative has travelled to seven other European cities, namely Bari, Lille, Ostrava, Lublin, The Hague, Sofia, and Aalborg, through the Transfer Network (TN) Com.Unity.Lab, which is part of the European programme URBACT.

Intending to build a rationale for the proposed analytical framework, this study first presents the theoretical grounding of policy mobility, followed by co-production and co-governance in urban policy-making, and introduces the case study of Com.Unity.Lab. It then explores the role of time and emphasises other temporalities, particularly the Southern approach to time. Afterwards, it elaborates on the methodological approach of the study that draws upon the empirical fieldwork activities and examines the importance of power distribution within the framework. Fieldwork analysis provides evidence that underlies the need for this framework, followed by a detailed description of the proposal and its application. When building the foundations of the analytical framework for assessing co-policy mobility outcomes, Gaventa's (2006) power cube was contextualised and adapted to fit the research objectives. To allow multiple entry points, the study concludes with some final remarks on the framework's rationale and summarises the key findings, anticipated application obstacles, and implications.

## 2. Co-Production and Co-Governance in Urban Policy Making

In contemporary urban environments, a notable increase is observed in citizen-led initiatives that aim to transform urban landscapes (Miraftab, 2017; Mitlin, 2021; Soja, 2009). In contexts where state-provided services are perceived as inadequate to meet genuine citizen needs and the demand for social and spatial equity is increasing, residents actively engage in activities to enhance communities and advocate for shared infrastructure in neighbourhoods managed as communal resources, some of them aiming at cooperating closely with public administration. Recent European policy interventions, such as the Bologna Regulation (City of Bologna, 2014) and the Ordenanza de Cooperación Público-Social de Madrid (Ayuntamiento de

Madrid, n.d.), seek to address the demands of locals by supporting these initiatives. These are mainly policies that focus on urban co-production and co-governance, occasionally combining both—into what may be termed co-policies.

Our study defines *co-policies* within the context of city-making, as agreement-based urban policies designed to support active citizen initiatives, particularly those related to the use, improvement, and long-term maintenance of public spaces. These policies enable knowledge sharing and structured cooperation between public administrations and citizens, rooted in the frameworks of *co-production* and *co-governance*. In this context, drawing from Joshi and Moore's (2006) definition, *co-production* refers to the collaborative efforts of state agencies and organised citizen groups to address local needs, not just through service provision but also by establishing meaningful, sustained relationships. From this perspective, co-policies emerge as mechanisms that allow citizens and governments to build partnerships that address public space management and other civic needs. As illustrated in Mitlin's (2008) work, these policies serve as political strategies that allow citizens to engage actively with state institutions, creating opportunities for greater inclusivity and responsiveness to local concerns. On the other hand, *co-governance* focuses on the sustainable co-management of resources, which is essential for the long-term viability of co-produced initiatives. This element aligns with Iaione's (2017) concept of mutual governance, where the ongoing maintenance of urban resources relies on partnerships that balance contributions from public bodies, social organisations, and citizen groups. This emphasis on continuous collaboration underscores a shift towards what Fung and Wright (2003) term "empowered participatory governance," where governance is not only cooperative but strives to balance power asymmetries within the decision-making process.

By integrating mechanisms that allow marginalised voices to influence public policies, co-policies contribute to more equitable city-making and democratised resource management. Moreover, as Albrechts (2013) argue, truly participatory planning involves collaborative actions that transcend theory-driven rationality, cultivating shared attitudes and empowering local actors. Co-governance, therefore, requires not only partnerships but also a realignment of power and influence to address the inequalities often inherent in traditional urban governance structures. Thus, co-policies, as such, encapsulate these multidimensional efforts, bridging the collaborative resource generation found in co-production with the long-term, community-focused stewardship integral to co-governance. In this context, Lisbon's BIP-ZIP strategy can be considered as a co-policy that supports place-based, citizen-led initiatives, fostering a localised governance structure. By doing so, co-policies can reinforce the importance of shared management and democratic accountability in urban planning (Mitlin & Bartlett, 2021).

## 3. Policy Mobility and TNs

In policy mobility, individuals, institutions, and networks circulate the frameworks that form the foundation of policy formulation (McCann, 2011; Peck, 2011; Peck & Theodore, 2010; Stone et al., 2019; Temenos & McCann, 2013). They leverage their intellectual authority or domain-specific expertise to reinforce particular policy frameworks or to substantiate certain normative criteria as paradigms of "best practice," while simultaneously identifying the situations that governmental entities should avoid. The dynamics and modes of knowledge production are invariably intertwined with these processes. Both the creation and mobility of co-polices are informed by various knowledge claims including codified, formal, and technical knowledge, as well as tacit, practical, and grassroots knowledge (Stone et al., 2019). The inherently multi-stakeholder

nature of policy mobility involves contextualising transferred frameworks by integrating and addressing the realities of local knowledge.

As noted by Haupt (2023), "the modifiability of policies" is central to policy mobility, yet its results and impacts have not received notable attention in the literature. Although co-policies are increasingly mobile as well, scientific approaches for analysing their mobility are scarce. How these policies—which are typically disseminated by government agencies as *best practices* and receive public funding—are encouraged to travel and inspire other cities is poorly understood. Moreover, less is known about the outcomes of mobility implementation and the methodological procedures that shaped the circulation of policies (Haupt, 2023), particularly those "demanding a step beyond the relative comfort zone of case studies and semi-structured interviews" (Cochrane & Ward, 2012).

It is particularly relevant considering TNs, also called Transfer Municipal Networks, which are organised frameworks designed to facilitate the circulation, adaptation, and implementation of policies, practices, and ideas among cities. They play a pivotal role in enabling knowledge exchange, policy learning, and collaborative governance across urban contexts, fostering transnational cooperation among policymakers, experts, local authorities, and organisations (McCann, 2011). TNs empower cities to share inspiring practices that contribute to urban regeneration and socio-spatial justice, as seen in platforms like URBACT, Urban Innovative Actions, the Interreg programmes, the European Urban Knowledge Network, and the Driving Urban Transitions partnership. While TNs facilitate structured knowledge-sharing among cities, they often overlook the long-term assessment of transferred policies after their initial implementation phase. This is partly because follow-up assessments are typically not included in the program budget. As a result, outcomes beyond the first year of implementation remain poorly documented or entirely unknown. While many TNs operate with robust structures during the transfer phase, there is a significant gap in their capacity for long-term evaluation of outcomes. Giovanni Allegretti, both a scholar and a practitioner in the field, notes that:

> Although I do not have detailed knowledge of the monitoring processes for all of them, to the best of my understanding, the available outcome materials are fragmented, and there appears to be no coherent policy for long-term evaluation in most cases. If such mechanisms do exist, I would say they are either not accessible or not easily usable; therefore, from a practical standpoint, it is as if they do not exist, unfortunately. (G. Allegretti, personal communication, November 18, 2024)

The lack of structured, accessible, and user-friendly assessment tools for long-term evaluation hinders the ability to understand the sustained impact of policies adopted in other cities. This gap highlights the need not only for developing effective assessment tools over time but also for ensuring their dissemination, usability, and communication. Without these elements, the broader goals of TNs—such as fostering lasting urban transformation and achieving territorial cohesion—remain unfulfilled. For instance, the *UIA 2014–2020* report highlights that nearly one-third of projects could not determine whether their activities would be maintained or further developed after the funding period ended (Urban Innovative Actions, 2020). This underscores the need for an optimised resource assessment mechanism that ideally covers a medium-term, post-implementation period. Regarding URBACT—which includes the case study titled Com.Unity.Lab Transfer Network—research has shown that the long-term relational and territorial impacts of similar TN outcomes remain under-documented (Domorenok et al., 2023). Thus, it would be beneficial to have access to open-access tools that allow cities to document and analyse outcomes over extended periods.

Furthermore, many TN initiatives produce intangible outcomes, such as strengthened partnerships or increased confidence among local actors, which are often difficult to measure. These relational outcomes, despite their significance, are rarely captured in conventional territorial impact assessments. For example, the "multiplying effects" of URBACT III have been described as a snowballing process that catalyses larger initiatives, yet there is insufficient documentation of their long-term impacts (URBACT, 2018, p. 35). It is also acknowledged that existing databases, such as keep.eu, while providing structured data, often lack comprehensive details on budgets, expected results, and long-term achievements, hindering the ability to draw meaningful conclusions (Briot et al., 2021, p. 57). One recommendation from URBACT's evaluation document is that URBACT could incorporate conditions into TN agreements that encourage or mandate continued engagement by local groups for a set period after the networking phase (URBACT, 2018, p. 42).

In this context, this study mainly reflects on the co-policies transferred to new contexts and focuses on the temporal dimension of their operation. Given the diversity of outcomes—many of which are intangible and relational as mentioned above—their territorial impact may only become apparent long after the formal transfer period has concluded. This extended time frame necessitates adaptable and long-term evaluation strategies that reflect the nuanced and evolving nature of these initiatives. This study, therefore, aims to establish an analytical framework for examining the changes in power relations across its implementation to assess whether or not co-policies that are re-applied to different cities contribute to power distribution. We argue that focusing on power distribution over time enables the assessment of the extent to which co-policies inspired from elsewhere will contribute to spatial justice in their new contexts.

The first BIP/ZIP mobility was facilitated by the Com.Unity.Lab TN, supported by the EU-funded URBACT programme, which promotes sustainable urban development through city-to-city knowledge exchange. The key arguments of this study have been developed during empirical fieldwork activities on the policy mobility of BIP/ZIP, which adapts the "follow the policy" approach by Peck and Theodore (2012). This approach proposes following the journey of a policy and examining its mobility and interactions among people, materials, and events. Through participant observation, document analysis, and interviews, it reveals the complexities and nuances of policy interconnections. The close observation of the Com.Unity.Lab TN within this study highlighted the need for a continuous assessment of policy outcomes. Analysing only the immediate outcomes of TNs, which is typically the case for many urban public policies identified as best practices, is insufficient.

After following up on the first mobility of the BIP/ZIP policy, we recognised the importance of analysing the temporal dimension of these processes to understand their impact in new contexts. Assessing the temporal dimension of urban co-policy mobility is essential, as time shapes how power is negotiated, distributed, and reconfigured when policies are introduced and adapted in new contexts. Policy creation, adaptation, and implementation are processes that take time, particularly for co-policies that involve extensive cooperation among groups in local democratic practices. Co-production processes require numerous gatherings and extensive negotiations involving multiple stakeholders to reach a common ground. They consequently require more time compared with top-down planning methods. Similarly, in urban co-governance, power dynamics are not static; they fluctuate based on stakeholder engagement, contextual changes, and the policy's responsiveness to specific local needs. Policy development involves a constant adaptation to contextual changes and continuous collective efforts to enhance the model. As a result, co-governance

development exhibits a spiral trajectory rather than a linear one, time-wise. This dynamic nature demands a significant level of dedication from all actors.

In this regard, temporal analysis illuminates the evolution of co-policy developments, revealing how the initial principles and structures may be transformed or challenged by local realities, social dynamics, and shifting stakeholder interactions. Examining these changes over time allows us to assess the resilience, adaptability, and genuine potential for territorial cohesion in co-policies like BIP/ZIP. This process not only supports policy adaptation for improved performance and flexibility but also enables stakeholders—such as local councils and community groups—to organise effectively in regard to these evolving dynamics. In essence, collaborative endeavours and the implementation of public policies involving numerous stakeholders are time-consuming. Therefore, considering time as a key parameter of assessing co-policy mobility outcomes is crucial. In analysing the outcomes of current European policy mobility related to urban processes derived from co-production and co-governance, we propose to address the aspects of spatial justice as a dynamic process that evolves over time instead of as a static *snapshot*.

## 4. The Southern Approach to Time and Space

Discourse in mainstream planning frequently overlooks the distinct temporal narratives embedded within the socio-spatial structures and practices of cities (Hutter & Wiechmann, 2022), which limits the exploration of alternative urban imaginaries. This notion presents an opportunity for critically examining the ostensibly *neutral* and *technical* assumptions that underpin various approaches to urbanism, including the linearity of time. Apart from asking which temporalities produce specific city forms (Wall & Knierbein, 2023), acknowledging that societies have crafted diverse urban landscapes influenced by cyclical, linear, and other structured understandings of time is crucial. Exploring the intersection between Indigenous knowledge systems and senses of place (Estermann, 2013) can lead to valuable insights for the reintegration of cultural values into urban planning. Embracing the richness of diverse temporalities and uncovering hidden spatiotemporal narratives from the Global South can fuel the development of alternative theories, methodologies, practices, urban forms, and politics that better reflect the complex realities of contemporary cities.

Temporalities are deeply woven into the fabric of contemporary urban landscapes. Wall and Knierbein (2023, p. 108) argue that social rhythms permeate the textures of streets and the configurations of neighbourhoods, which continually shape and reshape urban spaces. Despite their crucial role in planning processes, scholars have overlooked temporal categories in analytical frameworks for case analysis (Hutter & Wiechmann, 2022, p. 159). This oversight can be attributed to the influence of modernist periods during which notions of linear time prevailed, which reduced the intricate web of everyday rhythms, cyclical time, and ceremonial moments to a narrow framework of past, present, and future timelines (Wall & Knierbein, 2023, p. 107). This perspective has confined the understanding of time to a simplistic clock-time framework, which is characterised by linear and objective temporalities (Hutter & Wiechmann, 2022).

Despite the general neglect of the time dimension, Wall and Knierbein (2023) highlight a specific group of urban studies scholars who focus on the role of time, particularly those investigating chronopolitics. These scholars examine assumptions about time in urban politics, the political manipulation of temporalities, and the construction of meaning through temporal references. However, methods that analyse various

sequences, causal relations, or pivotal moments of transition remain uncommon (Hutter & Wiechmann, 2022). The authors argue that "too often, time is treated like a 'container' for presenting empirical findings on planning processes" (Hutter & Wiechmann, 2022, p. 162). They advocate the exploration of time and temporality beyond a linear, clock-time view among urban researchers and practitioners, which implies that an in-depth understanding of these concepts would enhance their work.

Aligned with these discussions, our proposed framework adopts a critical stance and draws on theories that advocate for urban analysis with a "view from the South" (Watson, 2009). Andean understanding inspires this Southern perspective on time in urban policy mobility. According to Estermann (2013), the Andean notion of spiral time challenges the Western conception of linear time, which implies progress, irreversibility, and quantifiability. Instead, the cyclical principle of time views *pacha* (space-time) as a spiral that consists of periodic cycles (Manga Quespi, 1994). This perspective critiques Western modernist narratives that frame development as a linear progression and modernity as the definitive surpassing of the "pre-modern" or "old-fashioned" (cf. Estermann, 2013). Aligned with these Southern approaches, our framework considers a cyclical relationship with time, prioritising the process narrative. It proposes the examination of the transformation of relationships, shifting viewpoints, evolving perspectives, and intermediary results, which emphasises that outcomes are inherently dynamic and ever-changing. This approach involves the analysis of city-making processes by accumulating cyclical layers and loops.

Overall, the proposed framework advocates for a continuous and cyclical lens on policy implementation with the objective of providing a comprehensive understanding of the policy implementation journey. This approach facilitates the identification of patterns, trends, and shifts in power dynamics that influence the development and impact of policy mobility. Such analysis enables stakeholders to make informed decisions, adapt policies to changing circumstances, and address emerging challenges over time. Understanding the evolution of power dynamics provides a comprehensive view of policy outcomes. This comprehension of the impact of co-policy mobility on neighbourhoods and communities can support the development of a more equitable city-making process.

## 5. Research Process

The proposed analytical framework is derived from an empirical fieldwork analysis on the temporal dynamics of power distribution within Com.Unity.Lab TN, and specifically focuses on the initial mobility of the BIP/ZIP policy—the Com.Unity.Lab TN process ran from 3 April 2018 to 14 June 2021. The leading author closely followed the process from 21 February 2020 until its conclusion and actively participated in most meetings. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, these meetings were held virtually. In addition to annual Transnational Meetings, "coordination meetings" occurred weekly or bi-weekly. Representatives from all participating municipalities—Bari, Aalborg, Sofia, Ostrava, Lublin, The Hague, Lille, and Lisbon—typically attended, with one to three participants per city, usually the project's operational leads. Occasionally, members of the URBACT Local Groups joined when their contributions were relevant. Towards the end of the process, dedicated sessions were held to develop and present the toolkit at the URBACT Festival. Our leading author actively participated in Lisbon's presentation of the Com.Unity.Lab initiative. Thus, our analysis was based on a wide range of documents and resources, including the application document, progress reports, TN podcasts, transfer diary entries (one per city), transfer plans and reports (one per city), final "learning logs" (one per city), and updates from the Com.Unity.Lab website and network.

Our research process began with "follow the policy" (Peck & Theodore, 2012), which enabled tracking the journey of the policy by thinking with and through this policy and its mobility across time and territories. This approach enabled the examination of the dynamics and connections among people, materials, and events within their respective territories over time, falling under three methods: following the actors, following the decisions, and following the effects. The empirical fieldwork is based on these three intertwined methods and our analytical framework benefited from its results. Besides the theoretical and methodological discussions among authors, the embodied and critical engagement of the leading author within the BIP/ZIP process in Lisbon enriched the data collected and analysed as part of the fieldwork. Aligned with the above-mentioned methods, our analysis focused on (a) human and non-human actors via stakeholder and context analyses (following the actors); (b) decisions via an in-depth document and protocol analysis (following the decisions); and (c) the effects of the TN via stakeholder interviews and self-evaluative focus groups (following the effects). This methodological approach situates the research at the intersection of critical action research and policy mobility studies, allowing for an in-depth examination of the complexities within urban co-policies. It enables the examination of diverse actors' roles, the tracing of decision-making pathways, and an assessment of how the outcomes of co-policy initiatives in urban settings develop and change over time. We share here key reflections from our analysis across the aforementioned methods.

## 5.1. Following the Actors

According to our observations, virtual meetings throughout the BIP/ZIP process mainly facilitated idea exchange and problem-solving among municipal technicians and representatives of local groups, including local associations and other civil society organisations. Local municipal teams independently determined their actions and shared outcomes during Com.Unity.Lab gatherings. We analysed stakeholder engagement during the implementation process in contrast to performed local actions. Our work revealed that engagement levels varied among the municipal teams. Building trust, learning, and translating inspiration into action were gradual and time-consuming. Meetings were more productive when participants felt comfortable sharing concerns and unconventional ideas. Public policy creation and implementation are inherently slow and context-responsive processes, which are further slowed down by bureaucratic hurdles and necessary adjustments, especially in co-policy processes such as BIP/ZIP. Our analysis showed that actors with different motivations and levels of engagement were involved, depending on their power positions. This was further reflected in the individual takeaways from the process, spanning from strategies of replicating the policy framework in their own contexts to ideas related to adopting and adjusting its particular elements or actions towards initiating a radical policy change in their cities. By following the actors and their mode of participation, we understand that the dynamics and priorities of local municipalities and other actors may change over time, and this accordingly affects how co-policies are transferred, modified, and implemented.

## 5.2. Following the Decisions

Throughout the BIP/ZIP process, strategic decisions frequently occurred outside online meetings, which are led by the Lisbon Local Development Department and a URBACT Lead Expert. Municipal technicians addressed day-to-day tasks, yet, they were not in a position to make decisions. The partnering cities developed context-specific co-policies that focused on power distribution through co-production and co-governance instead of replicating the format. Our analysis included document examination—project logs,

key decisions, and rationale—supported by the interviews with the Lisbon Local Development Department, which enabled us to trace decisions as they occurred. Within the mobility of BIP/ZIP, Sofia created a priority zone map. Bari enhanced facilities for citizen contribution and integrated BIP/ZIP learnings into its innovation ecosystem. Aalborg incorporated BIP/ZIP insights into three urban development plans, while Lille updated the grant scheme of its citizens. Lublin created a BIP/ZIP-inspired city map and emphasised the importance of a local group. Ostrava mapped neighbourhoods and prepared a grant scheme, and The Hague worked with community-led local development and drew inspiration from the mapping method of Lisbon. Lisbon rethought a few BIP/ZIP structures after learning from the experiences of other cities, particularly digital tools. Therefore, following the decisions in and beyond Lisbon proves the necessity of uncovering power structures in decision-making processes, shaped by professional positions and roles of the partnering municipalities within the network.

### 5.3. Following the Effects

Regarding the impact of TNs, no structured evaluation proposal exists for the Com.Unity.Lab policy framework. Thus, we implemented an analysis process during five of the last Com.Unity.Lab online meetings. This analytical process was inspired by the method called "*que bom/que tal/que pena*" ("how nice that…/what if…?/what a pity that…"). This straightforward method was used with the Com.Unity.Lab TN group after selected meetings, including feedback sessions on online events and the local adaptation of the BIP/ZIP tools. Each session lasted no more than one hour, during which the participants shared their thoughts on what worked well, what could be improved, and what did not work (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** The outcome of the "how nice that…/what if…?/what a pity that…" session that focused on the community-led local development BIP/ZIP tool transfer process. Notes: The colours were chosen randomly and do not carry any particular significance for the analysis, meaning they can be disregarded when interpreting the results; CLLD = community-led local development.

As the "how nice that.../what if...?/what a pity that..." method was applied five times during the project, certain aspects of the policy transfer outcomes were analysed by the meeting participants, which enabled advancement in forming local policies, understanding the rationale underlying specific choices—such as how to approach decision-makers or how long some process should take—and analysing their consequences. The participating Lisbon team involved in the Com.Unity.Lab TN affirmed that this regular assessment, although relatively simple, was meaningful to the project process.

Similar to other URBACT TNs, the final report of Com.Unity.Lab contained the first steps of the policies proposed by partners, which were inspired by BIP/ZIP. However, it lacked information on the current status of the local outcomes development and further plans, which left a knowledge gap about its progress. The application of the "how nice that.../what if...?/what a pity that..." method highlighted the advantages of employing a simple and collective analysis method. This aligns with a Southern approach that prioritises resource optimisation, which ensures that even groups with limited resources can engage in analytical reflection throughout the process. Afterwards, the team of municipal technicians in Lisbon recognised the importance of an adaptable framework for evaluating power distribution within TNs:

> We think it would be beneficial if cities involved in URBACT networks were encouraged to maintain the partnership and monitor the results over a period of time (e.g., through pre-defined monitoring indicators at the application stage). This would allow URBACT to fine-tune not only the evaluation criteria of the projects/networks but also the type of networks (sharing, transfer, etc.). Therefore, the idea of assessing the results of Com.Unity.Lab over time would be welcome. (Lisbon team municipal technicians, personal communication, February 15, 2022)

### 5.4. Final Methodological Remarks

The empirical findings of the fieldwork imply that stakeholders in policy mobility processes appreciate and are likely to adopt analytical frameworks, especially if such frameworks are straightforward, intuitive, and easy to apply. Repeatedly employing these frameworks provides meaningful insights into the subject. Notably, the study identified the potential for stakeholders and local groups to independently apply this framework, which ensures responsible resource management—an aspect previously unexplored under the current procedures.

## 6. An Analytical Framework for Assessing Co-Policy Mobility Outcomes

### 6.1. The Role of Power (Distribution) in Co-Policy Mobility

In urban co-governance, power dynamics do not remain static; they fluctuate based on stakeholder engagement, contextual shifts, and the policy's responsiveness to specific local needs. By closely examining these changes over time, we can assess the resilience, adaptability, and true inclusiveness of co-policies like BIP/ZIP. A temporal perspective also allows for tracking intermediary outcomes, identifying critical moments where the policy may require recalibration to stay aligned with the goals towards socio-spatial justice. As theorised within Southern epistemologies, time is not just a backdrop for policy transfer but an active force that reshapes how co-policies materialise and impact communities, reinforcing the need for continuous assessment and adaptation to foster fairer cities.

We have drawn inspiration from several frameworks when considering applicability across diverse stakeholders and contexts. Frameworks like the Just City Index (Griffin, 2018) and The Chaz! Framework for Women's Empowerment, as documented in *A New Weave of Power, People & Politics* (VeneKlasen & Miller, 2007), aim to analyse policies that address power imbalances in city-making, often dealing with intangible aspects. To illustrate, the Just City Index, which was developed by the Just City Lab at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, provides a set of values—such as power, democracy, fairness, resilience, and engagement—that guide participants in assessing urban spaces and governance arrangements. These indicators are adaptable, allowing stakeholders to prioritise those values most relevant to their specific contexts. Adaptability is particularly relevant in the context of TNs, where policies must be tailored to local conditions. Although applying the index is an extensive process, it is conceptually accessible, as Griffin (2018) emphasises the importance of a collective and context-specific definition of justice and the values that should be prioritised. The Chaz! Framework for Women's Empowerment, as documented in *A New Weave of Power, People & Politics* (VeneKlasen & Miller, 2007), offers further insights into the transformative processes necessary for successful policy mobility. This dynamic, interactive framework illustrates how individual and collective empowerment evolves through conscientization, deconstruction, and political action, with time being a critical factor in its application. The Chaz! Framework is multi-dimensional, highlighting the foresight needed to account for changes over time, involving growth, conflict, and solidarity processes.

As highlighted within such frameworks, the distribution of resources across spaces and ensuring equitable access to opportunities for their use is closely linked to the concept of spatial justice and the pursuit of fairer cities and societies (Weck et al., 2021). Spatial justice provides a lens for reimagining justice through spatial and material perspectives, highlighting the importance of context-specific considerations (Young, 1990). Many scholars propose practical approaches for addressing these issues, including Dikeç (2005), Ghouchani et al. (2022), Rocco (2014), and Weck et al. (2021). As Moroni (2020, p. 260) states, "issues of justice arise when there are certain power structures in need of justification." This perspective is echoed by Rocco (2014), who argues that power imbalances in traditional hegemonic settings lead to spatial injustice, particularly in cities with radically uneven urban quality and access to common goods.

In discussing the development of the analytical framework in this article, we emphasise the significance of the "power" indicator as it connects to the concept of "democracy." Both of the frameworks mentioned above also establish this connection. A deeper distribution of power through cooperative instruments could align with Appadurai's (2002) notion of "deep democracy," which emphasises aspects like roots, anchors, intimacy, closeness, and locality. Fung and Wright (2001) assert that democracy has become synonymous with competitive elections for political leadership at both legislative and executive levels. They argue that there is a growing recognition that this electoral approach falls short of realising the fundamental principles of democratic governance. These principles include fostering active political engagement among citizens, achieving political consensus through dialogue, and formulating and implementing public policies that contribute to a productive and healthy society. In more radical egalitarian versions of the democratic ideal, the goal is to ensure that all citizens benefit from the wealth of the nation (Fung & Wright, 2001, p. 5).

At this stage, we argue that analysing power distribution is essential for understanding the limitations and potentialities of policy mobility. This analysis will serve as the backbone of the proposed framework, helping identify recommendations regarding policy transfer, translation, and implementation. It will also provide

insights into the practicality and feasibility of transferring policy experiences from Lisbon to other cities. Power distribution, in the context of city-making, is linked to how cities and city authorities—in their interactions with citizens and local initiatives—learn. It is, therefore, closely related to the reciprocal learning process between local governments and communities, particularly in adapting these learnings to meet specific needs. Of particular interest is how they learn enough to adapt these lessons to their local context and become multipliers of co-produced knowledge.

We propose that analysing power distribution over time, with a focus on urban temporalities, can complement the analysis of policy mobility limitations and opportunities, thereby contributing to the formulation of recommendations for the translation and implementation of these policies. To explore the notion of power within these processes, we embrace the power cube framework of Gaventa (2006; Figure 2). Assessing transformative action in various political spaces, this framework serves as a tool for reflecting on collective agency by mapping different types of power. Gaventa's definition of power as the ability to make and enforce decisions is central to our approach. Departing from this definition, the power cube framework analyses three dimensions of power, namely, forms of power, spaces of power, and levels of power, which align with the "three faces" of power by Lukes (1974, 2005) and were further elaborated by Gaventa (2006). This framework not only deals with these dimensions but also considers different modes of power—*power over*, *power to*, *power with*, and *power within*—as dynamic and interrelated.

VeneKlasen and Miller (2007) expand on the concept of *power over* in which one person or institution restricts the actions of another to include other dimensions of power. As addressed by Holloway (2005), *power to* refers to the ability to act, which begins with the awareness that action is possible and can transform into skill development and realisation of change. *Power with* describes collective action and agency, which stems from union and a shared understanding, while *power within* refers to confidence and self-esteem as a result of the recognition of one's situation and potential for change. These notions interact within the multidimensional framework of the power cube method, and, in our context, provide a comprehensive tool for analysing power dynamics and their role in policy implementation and mobility. The three faces of the cube represent an interplay of the three notions of power that emerged from debates
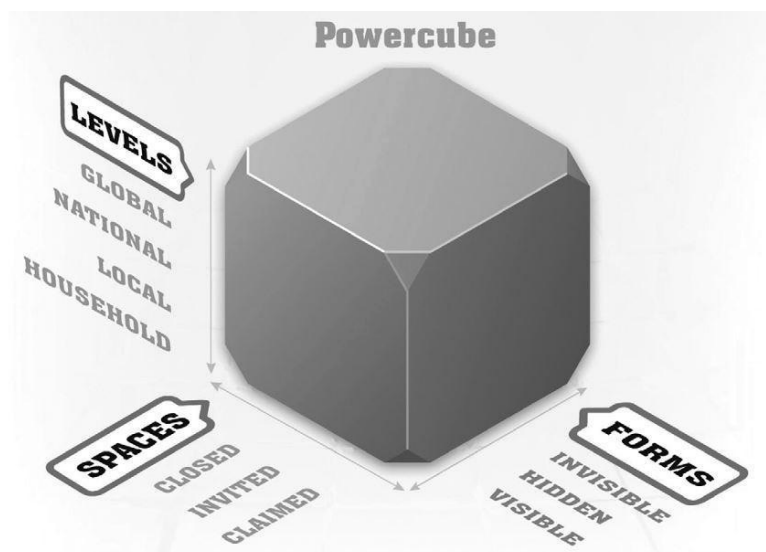


**Figure 2.** Power cube framework by John Gaventa. Source: Gaventa (2019).

on how power operates in political decision-making processes and inform the proposed analytical framework. As such, the power cube serves as a navigational tool for conceptualising the proposed analytical framework. This paper then contextualises the power cube using the case of BIP/ZIP policy mobility (Com.Unity.Lab TN).

## 6.2. Contextualising the Framework

Given the significance of developing a meaningful, feasible, and context-specific analysis of policy mobility, we propose an analytical framework as a meaningful synthesis of the power cube method and our empirical work, adapted to the co-policy mobility process. We developed it as a tool for comprehending the implementation results and outcomes of co-policies within policy mobility contexts. The aim of the framework is to enhance the analysis of urban co-policies and illuminate their potential in fostering local co-production and co-governance towards spatial justice.

This concept led to the creation of a matrix primarily based on the above-mentioned power cube framework, which is designed for straightforward application through detailed subsequent questions. These questions are based on the three dimensions of the cube, each offering a distinct analysis of power, namely, forms, layers, and spaces. This method visually maps an analysed scenario, which encompasses actors, relationships, and forces, and explores avenues for movement, mobilisation, and change. By dissecting different power dynamics, the objective is to reveal the expressions of power as *power over*, *power to*, *power with*, and *power within*. In this context, we first envisioned the application of these power dimensions to the analysis of the policy mobility results of the BIP/ZIP strategy (Table 1). We used the Com.Unity.Lab case to provide tangible examples corresponding to the dimensions of the power cube.

### 6.2.1. Spaces of Power

In Gaventa's (2006) formulation, spaces of power encompass *closed space*s, *offered spaces*, and *claimed space*s. Closed spaces are those where there is no opportunity for public input, such as budgetary decisions made by ministries of education and finance that cannot be directly influenced by the public. Offered spaces are created top-down, establishing new places of social encounter where actors from science and practice can collaborate on specific projects. These spaces facilitate engagement and interaction within predetermined frameworks. In contrast, claimed spaces arise from grassroots efforts through civil society actions, differing from offered spaces by being initiated from the bottom up rather than through top-down directives. In our framework, we kept closed spaces as proposed by Gaventa (2016) and interpreted them as the spaces where meetings with exclusive participation occurred. Given the territorial implications of the city-making process from the urban planning perspective, we adapted the remaining *spaces of power* according to the dynamics of Com.Unity.Lab. We first introduced *co-spaces* in which local government and citizen groups collaboratively provide public services, which fosters urban resource creation and promotes co-governance through public–social partnerships. These environments, whether pre-existing, enhanced, or driven by policy, emphasise the significance of local co-production and co-governance. Examples include spaces for collaborative service design meetings, areas for testing urban solutions, and hands-on workshops. We also propose the term *citizen spaces* to refer to citizen-managed and -led physical spaces and initiatives in the city that influence the local political landscape. These spaces may collaborate with each other, adhere to clear advocacy guidelines, and take collective action, which forms a robust network.

**Table 1.** Contextualised dimensions of power for the Com.Unity.Lab and the BIP/ZIP policy.

| Power cube dimensions | Gaventa's model | Policy mobility model | Com.Unity.Lab |
|---|---|---|---|
| Spaces | Closed | Closed spaces | Closed meetings and gatherings; local municipalities team meetings not open for citizens. |
| | Offered | Co-spaces as co-production and co-governance spaces; mutual learning spaces | Spaces where meetings are held to discuss and exchange ideas about challenges and solutions, which fosters cooperation dynamics during co-design meetings and participation workshops. |
| | | | These include neighbourhood support units (GABIPs), neighbourhood associations, community-led local development network spaces and others. |
| | Claimed/Created | Citizens' spaces | Independent neighbourhood associations, civil society organisations and insurgent movements. |
| Levels | Global | Trans-municipal; international | Com.Unity.Lab TN meetings between partner cities and other meetings and decisions that could influence the co-policy local implementation. |
| | National | Municipal | Municipal staff meetings; actions and plans with local partners such as local groups and organised citizens. |
| | Local | Community | Neighbourhood: priority neighbourhood developments. |
| Forms | Invisible | Inscribed in the positionalities of those involved | Invisible as characterisations of power inherent to the members or groups involved in co-policy implementation that are present in interpersonal relationships, such as social position, origin, gender and race, which directly influences the process under analysis. |
| | Hidden | Differentiated interests | Hidden as undeclared interests of the EU, URBACT, municipalities, members of Com.Unity.Lab and citizens who guide their decisions and parameters and who exert direct influence. |
| | Visible | Decision-making processes | Visible as official decision-making bodies of members of Com.Unity.Lab and decisions of URBACT, municipalities and the EU, which directly influence the implementation of local policies in question. |

### 6.2.2. Levels of Power

This dimension of the power cube identifies international, national, and local power places, pointing to framework conditions, goals, and effects across all levels and coalitions between *global*, *national*, and *local* actors. Considering a wide institutional span—from local to global—that characterises policy mobility processes, we adapted the levels of power, beginning with municipal policy mobility and eventually applying the referred dimension to the specific approach of co-policies. The proposed levels span three tiers. At the *local level*, the power dynamics are examined, which involve policy mobility structures, such as the Com.Unity.Lab TN, and international directives, such as those from the EU, and focuses on global power

dynamics. At the *municipality level*, the framework explores power dynamics within cities engaged in policy transfer and implementation and considers tangible and intangible actors. This level includes cities, such as Lisbon, as policy originators, or others that adopt policies, such as Bari, Aalborg, Sofia, Ostrava, Lublin, The Hague, and Lille. At the *neighbourhood level*, the framework highlights the dynamics within specific neighbourhoods affected by the policy in the original city or cities that implement adaptations and are guided by the evolving application of the power cube.

### 6.2.3. Forms of Power

Gaventa's (2006) systematisation, further developed by VeneKlasen and Miller (2007), organises power into three forms of power: *hidden power*, *visible power*, and *invisible power*. *Visible power* refers to conflicts of interest that occur in public spaces, such as formal decision-making bodies within political or organisational structures. It is considered visible because the roles of the involved parties and the mechanisms of power are clearly defined. Otherwise, *hidden power* pertains to the unwritten rules that operate behind the scenes, giving an advantage to certain groups. This form of power affects decision-making processes by precluding certain alternatives from being considered, a phenomenon also described as the "mobilisation of bias" (Schattschneider, 1975). *Invisible power* extends beyond conscious actions, encompassing internalised ways of thinking and dominant ideologies that shape desires and imagination. It is related to social structures and their impact on self-perception, akin to Bourdieu's concept of "habitus," which involves internalised patterns of thought and action developed over time, giving individuals their place in society (Bourdieu, 2006). In our analytical framework, we interpreted invisible power as the power inherent to interpersonal relationships marked by the intersectional identities of participants such as class, ethnicity, race, and gender. Hidden power is associated with undeclared interests and motivations of different partner actors. In our adaptation, we considered visible power as decision-making processes boldly leading to the implementation of policies.

### 6.3. Framework Application

Ideally, the TN team initiates the implementation of the analytical framework at the beginning of the mobility process. However, the framework is conceived in such a manner that other stakeholders can also undertake this task after the commencement of the implementation process. Regardless of the initiator, convening sessions with various stakeholders involved or impacted by the co-policy application are recommended (Figure 3). Preferably, these sessions should be conducted in person, although online facilitation is another option. The sessions can be led by the initiator(s) or an external facilitator. To address potential limitations stemming from insufficient information about the process and the local project, a clear communication strategy should precede the implementation phase, ensuring a shared understanding among stakeholders.

Each session should last approximately two hours. The workshop should use open-ended questions tailored to the audience and may include supporting illustrations. Sessions can be conducted in various settings, such as a circle in a room, during a neighbourhood walk, or on digital platforms. The guiding principles of the Southernised perspective include privileging informal discussions, using non-assumptive formats, promoting solidarity and mutual learning, exploring diverse communication methods from the perspective of the interlocutor, and prioritising attention to the *periphery* as much as the *centre* by seeking external narratives and engaging with supporting actors. To minimise potential misunderstandings, we recommend paying
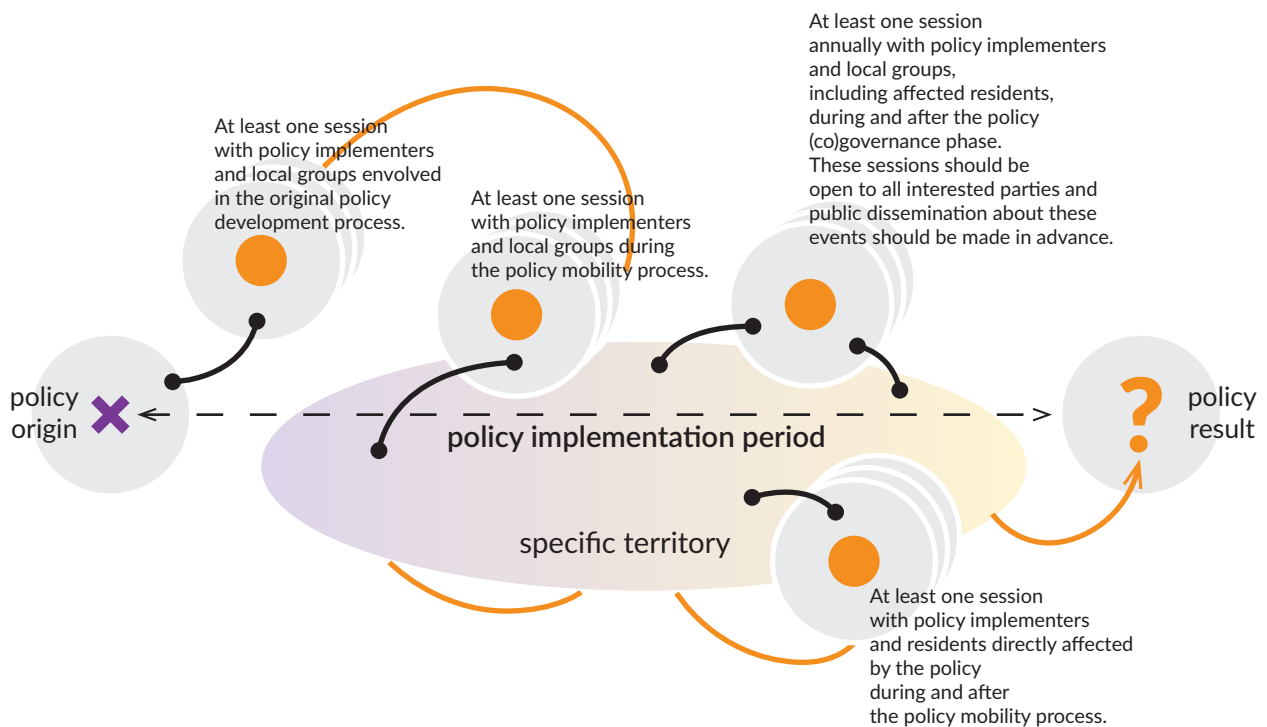
**Figure 3.** Recommendation for the timing of the application of the framework.

special attention to languages used during the sessions (technical, popular, minority, foreign, etc.) while organising regular feedback loops—making sure that everyone has something to say.

The sessions can begin by selecting one of the power cube dimensions, among *spaces*, *levels*, or *forms of power*. We recommend starting with *spaces of power*, as it is more tangible and therefore relatively easier to analyse, and we will use this as an example to illustrate the process. Figure 4 outlines the step-by-step process for the application session. Begin with a 10-minute introduction that provides an overview of the session's objectives, structure, and key concepts (e.g., "closed spaces," "co-spaces," and "citizen spaces"). Following the introduction, *spaces of power* can be explored in depth for approximately 30 minutes. During this time, diagrams representing each space of power (see Figure 5) can be presented, allowing participants to discuss each category of power and how it is perceived within each space. At this stage, various interlinked questions may help facilitate this part of the session, such as: "What kinds of spaces are involved in our policy mobility process?", "Who governs these spaces?", "Did you have full, restricted, or no access to such spaces?", "In which spaces did you meet other actors and collaborate?", "How do these spaces shape decision-making processes?", and "What opportunities or barriers did you encounter in these spaces?". Participants are then encouraged to share insights by placing notes around the space names, fostering a collective understanding. To address the potential limitations of abstract diagram representations, we recommend using supporting tools that explore various embodied activities. These may include utilising bodies, tangible objects, or physical models to capture and discuss the dynamics within *spaces of power*.

The following part of the session could then be either *forms of power* or *levels of power*. The *forms of power* part can be explored through questions such as: "What formal decision-making bodies and mechanisms shaped the policy?", "How transparent were the decision-making processes?", "Were there explicit conflicts
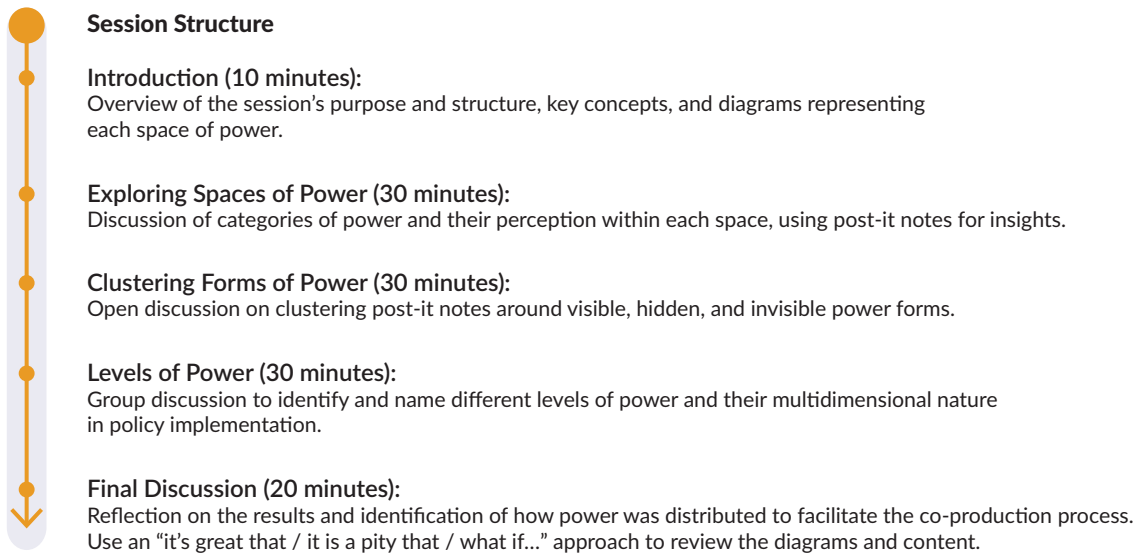
**Session Structure**

**Introduction (10 minutes):**
Overview of the session's purpose and structure, key concepts, and diagrams representing each space of power.

**Exploring Spaces of Power (30 minutes):**
Discussion of categories of power and their perception within each space, using post-it notes for insights.

**Clustering Forms of Power (30 minutes):**
Open discussion on clustering post-it notes around visible, hidden, and invisible power forms.

**Levels of Power (30 minutes):**
Group discussion to identify and name different levels of power and their multidimensional nature in policy implementation.

**Final Discussion (20 minutes):**
Reflection on the results and identification of how power was distributed to facilitate the co-production process. Use an "it's great that / it is a pity that / what if…" approach to review the diagrams and content.

**Figure 4.** Proposed session structure.



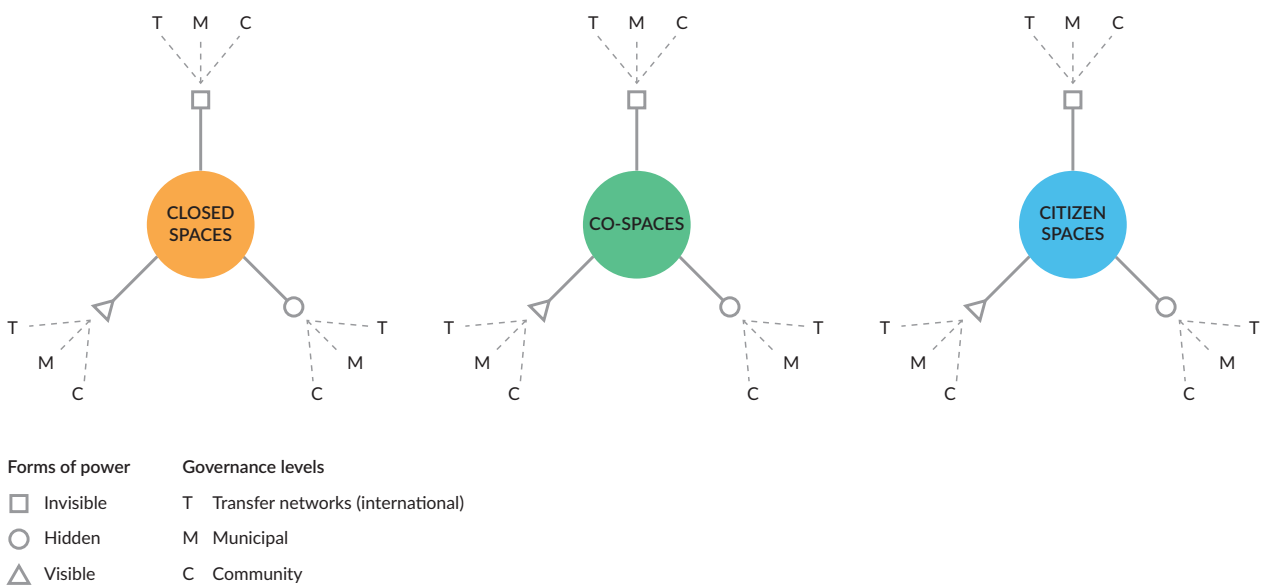| Forms of power | | Governance levels | |
|---|---|---|---|
| □ | Invisible | T | Transfer networks (international) |
| ○ | Hidden | M | Municipal |
| △ | Visible | C | Community |

**Figure 5.** Diagrams of each space of power.

of interest, and how were they managed or resolved?", "What tangible outcomes resulted directly from visible power dynamics?", "What informal practices or 'unwritten rules' influenced the policy's development or implementation?", "Are there any actors or groups that exert power behind the scenes?", "How do social norms, cultural beliefs, or dominant ideologies shape the implementation of the policy?", and "What internalised assumptions or biases influenced stakeholder behaviour or perceptions?". Similarly, the *levels of power* part can be organised in an analogous fashion, guided by questions such as: "Who are the primary actors and stakeholders involved at the local, municipal, and global levels?", "What are the key dynamics at play in the neighbourhoods or communities affected by the policy?", "How do local socio-cultural and economic conditions shape the mobility process of the policy?", "What localised resources, practices, or traditions influenced the policy's outcomes?", "What role do city-level actors (e.g., city councils, urban

planners) play in adapting or implementing the policy?", and "What formal or informal coalitions exist among cities involved in policy transfer?".

As post-session activities, we recommend organising and systematising the materials collected during the session to validate the findings with the stakeholders. As co-production and co-governance presuppose cooperation in the objectives, one could expect that the methods for analysis would also occur in cooperation. Thus, an important point will be the collective character of the policy assessment approach, which considers design, theory, and implementation, because "the programmes are the product of the policymaker's prediction. Their fate, however, always depends on the imagination of practitioners and participants. Rarely do these views fully coincide" (Pawson & Tilly, 2004, p. 3).

Finally, the proposed framework should be applied at least three times during the implementation process (as illustrated in Figure 3) to provide stakeholders with opportunities to reflect on, refine, and adjust their understanding of the power dynamics at different stages of the policy mobility process. This cyclical approach aligns with the concept of action research cycles, where each cycle builds on the previous one, fostering deeper insights into the context, actors, and power relations through "planning, acting, reflecting and re-planning, acting again and reflecting again" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 563). The first cycle should take place immediately after the policy is implemented, such as during a pilot project, to assess initial intentions. The second cycle should occur one year later, focusing on the first developments. The final cycle, approximately two years after implementation, provides an opportunity to make adjustments and improvements based on the results. With each application, the understanding of power distribution should deepen, offering participants a more refined perspective on how power dynamics shape the transfer and implementation processes. Over time, this depth increases as participants observe changes, adapt strategies, and learn from previous rounds of engagement.

## 7. Conclusion

This article proposes an analytical framework that aims to assess the extent to which co-policies inspired from elsewhere contribute to spatial justice in new adopting contexts. It highlights the potential utility of this framework, particularly in the context of co-policy mobility. These urban policies, which integrate co-production and co-governance of neighbourhood public spaces, serve as an inspiration for adapted replication in numerous other cities, especially within the European context. The challenge of assessing the impact of co-policies in the policy mobility context is significant given that European TNs, such as the URBACT ones, do not incorporate impact analysis into their processes. Moreover, implementation analyses are perceived as time-consuming and costly, which renders them impractical. Additionally, the individuals involved in these networks are typically mobile and not officially committed to medium- to long-term projects.

As stated by many stakeholders in the Com.Unity.Lab TN, including the documents generated by the URBACT process, trust-building, learning, and translating inspiration into action require time, which underscores their essential roles as critical factors. Therefore, beyond presenting a framework that is open to adaptation, this study concludes that any method applied to the assessment of information on the implementation of co-policies or policies predisposed to cooperation, which seeks to deepen democracy, should consider temporal power dynamics and their evolution over time. This consideration is essential for analysing results and taking action accordingly. An understanding of the temporal dynamics of power

distribution, as informed by the Southern approaches in the framework, can be instrumental in amplifying the voices that are typically unheard in current mobility processes.

In response to these challenges and with critical empirical insights, this study argues that a potential analytical approach involves assessing whether or not power is effectively distributed during co-policies implementation and development on-site. Thus, the two key factors, time and power, are operationalised for the structure of the framework. The proposed analytical framework provides tools for the assessment of the socio-spatial impact of policy work in spatial justice, emphasising the importance of time in policy analysis. Recognising the distinct nature of this policy format, the framework suggests *low-cost* and *easy-to-operate* protocols to encourage increased participation in policy analysis. Consequently, it enables a variety of actors to continuously analyse the policy implementation process and adjust strategies accordingly.

The originality of this study is in its weaving together multiple methods and providing a workable, hands-on, structured framework for the analysis of travelling co-policies for various stakeholders, thus lowering the threshold and democratising the process of spatializing social justice. Primarily designed to be useful for municipalities with limited resources (e.g., personnel or time), the proposed framework enables analysis of the implementation results beyond the official transfer periods and targeted resources. Grassroots organisations involved in or affected by the co-policy implementation can also utilise the framework to analyse the process and results, which enables reflection and informed action, such as the organisation of advocacy strategies. Furthermore, the framework is valuable for researchers who seek insights into the co-policy implementation process and its outcomes. By examining the evolution of complementary views on power across temporal scales, policymakers can gain valuable insights into the effectiveness and implications of co-policy mobility.

The methodology employed in developing the operationalisation of this framework provides valuable insights but is not without limitations. For example, a key challenge in applying the proposed framework lies in accessing individuals involved in policy-making and policy transfer. These professionals are often assigned to specific municipal projects and, once the funding period ends, are reassigned to other projects or departments. This mobility is further influenced by political cycles, which prioritise certain policies (and personnel) over others. Consequently, bringing participants together to engage with the framework becomes particularly challenging when the referenced policy is no longer central to their current roles. Another obstacle is the need to reconcile the diverse demands and priorities of these participants, which can impede the framework's practical implementation. Travelling policies are rooted in their home context and seeded in their application contexts, which often differ in institutional settings, languages spoken, cultural traditions, practices, and the motivations of those involved. For instance, language barriers exacerbate this issue: Some participants may lack fluency in the designated language for discussions, while others may struggle to bridge the gap between technical jargon and everyday language. Language barriers often include graphic language, as the proposed framework is organised and explained using an abstract diagram as visual support. Therefore, we recommend paying particular attention to these contextual differences when setting up tools and protocols for investigating the temporal power dynamics of travelling co-policies.

The presented analytical framework enables an exploration of power dynamics in urban co-production and co-governance, building on the rich body of knowledge around frameworks such as the power cube, as well as our empirical research based on the BIP/ZIP strategy process in Lisbon. By repeating the process over

and over again throughout the implementation phase, decisions taken and strategies applied will be more informed, those involved more committed, and effects created more beneficial for urban justice—which is the very cause of such policy programs. We conclude this article trusting that the proposed framework's applicability and purpose will be continuously tested through practice and reciprocally adjusted and improved in a broad range of urban contexts.

## Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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