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Mapping for Regions

Wil Zonneveld

Introduction

In this book we can find two broad interpretations of regional design. One is about institutional design: the creation of governance capacity to deal effectively with spatial planning issues perceived as ‘regional’. The importance and relevance of this interpretation stems from the fact that the scale of the ‘region’ – spatially unfixed as it is in all its different manifestations and interpretations – sits generally between constitutionally defined levels of administration. Governance capacity to deal with regional issues is therefore not self-evident and needs to be created via complex arrangements and processes.

Another interpretation of regional design is spatial design. We then enter the domain of spatial images. The range of such images or ‘visuals’ which are used in spatial design is bewildering: photographs, drawings, diagrams and schemes to name just a few (for examples, see for instance Thierstein and Förster 2008, Pojani and Stead 2015). Certainly the most widespread imagery in regional design is that of the map which can be defined as a schematic, reduced depiction or representation of a territory where there is at least some sort of connection between the territory in question and what has been selected and imaged on the map. At first sight this short description looks rather neutral, however, what is depicted on maps is most certainly not. We know from literature, especially the literature known as ‘critical cartography’, that the so-called ‘correspondence theory of mapping practice’ is profoundly flawed: there is no direct relationship between a map and the territory it supposedly represents (Crampton 2001). Maps, as Wood (1992) points out, construct and do not reproduce the world. They are socially constructed (Harley 1989).

It is precisely here, in mapping, that regional design as institutional design and regional design as spatial design meet and intertwine. Through mapping, regions may be proposed as spaces where critical issues manifest themselves now or in the (near or distant) future, where interventions and actions are suggested, necessary organizational measures and tools are put forward and argumentations about the why and the how are discussed. Obviously, all this cannot be mapped, but the storyline in which maps are embedded does. Maps are therefore not just communicative devices. Mapping processes may contribute to what Salet elsewhere

in this volume calls the patterning of public norms, the political and social acceptance and use of norms in practice. In this chapter we come across examples where the necessity of adopting new public norms is exactly the purpose of depicting areas and developments on a map.

Mapping as the hinge between institutional and spatial design is the perspective from which this chapter is conceived. Mapping stories and examples are collected from Dutch and European practice. Through these stories and examples we seek to illustrate in a more general sense what maps are and how they work.

Mapping, Metaphors and Agency

Space and Territory Welcome the Use of Metaphors

Maps and other forms of spatial representation do not stand on their own but are usually part of a discourse in which they are combined with verbal language. Particularly important are *metaphors* as they can have powerful associative meaning and often can be pictured (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, Albrechts, Healey and Kunzmann 2003). In planning and regional design organic metaphors are heavily used. Well-known examples are the *Fingerplanen* for Copenhagen, the Dutch *Randstad* (Rim City) and its *Groene Hart* (Green Heart) or the European *banana*, the supposedly economic core area of Europe. Sometimes a particular shape is used like the diamond on playing cards as in Flemish Diamond, the urban and economic concentration area in the Flemish region which has Gent, Antwerpen, Leuven and Brussels as vertices (Albrechts 1999, Albrechts, Healey and Kunzmann 2003). Heavily used other metaphors include the axis, the corridor, the pole, the network, the belt, the chain, the wing or the backbone, and metrical figures like triangles and pentagons. Often, metaphors are chosen during map-making processes: a particular form which comes to the fore when a map is created acquires a name which makes it possible to have a conversation about what is mapped.

The use of metaphors in planning may have unexpected effects. An example is the *Westvleugel* or West Wing. Since the (Dutch) *Randstad* became accepted as a planning concept around 1960 (see below) there is a general consensus in planning that it has a north as well as a south wing: it is not a full or semi-circle of cities. In the late 1980s the National Spatial Planning Agency proposed to change this conception, inspired by regional-economic data. It was thought that prime economic and cultural functions are concentrated in the western cities of the *Randstad* and far less in Utrecht, located in the east. As the metaphor of the wing was in use already for several decades, the agency believed that the idea of a *Westvleugel* would be accepted quite easily. In an internal discussion document this line of thinking was illustrated in a cartoon-style sort of map (see Figure 23.1).

Two matters were underestimated with quite fatal results. As north and south wing as concepts are about urban morphology, many believed that national planners proposed urban development along the western, coastal side of the *Randstad*. This was not what national planners had in mind though. What raised even more objections was the idea that Utrecht no longer belonged to the *Randstad*. Even the alternative of 'Western part of the *Randstad*' did not make it in the end: the damage was already done. This course of events may be explained as follows: the associative meaning which the wing as a planning concept acquired during decades of planning was totally overlooked by the planning agency. The message of this story is that the use and reuse of metaphors is not without dangers (for a comprehensive account of this example: Zonneveld 1992, Van Duinen 2004).

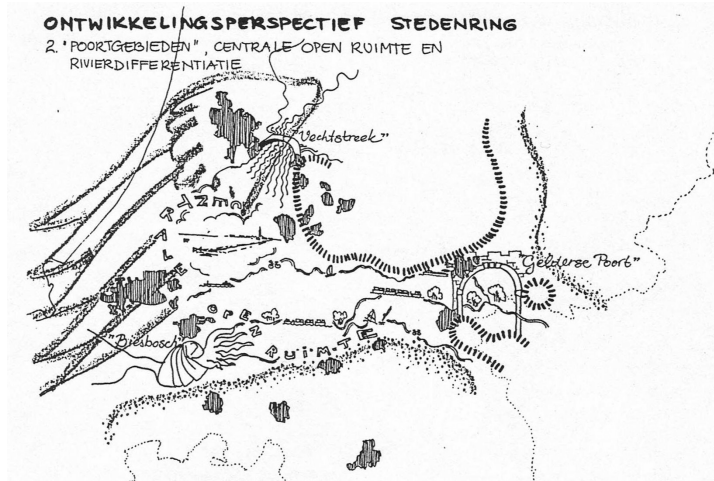


Figure 23.1 An early visualization of the Randstad West Wing
Source: Rijksplanologische Dienst, Projectgroep Inzoom (1987).

Agency

The combination of mapping, other sorts of spatial representation (like photographs, satellite images and schemes and diagrams) and verbal expressions have acquired certain names in the literature. Examples with a slightly different content are *imagery* (Van Duinen 2004, see also Van Duinen elsewhere in this volume), *imaginaries* (Davoudi 2018) or *spatial concept* (Zonneveld 2007, Balz 2019). The visual language of the map and the verbal language surrounding a map come together in the legend of the map. A legend explains in a concise way the signs which have been used to create a map. There is another word for legend (in fact a metaphor!) which is rather meaningful to understand a map and that is the *key*. As a material key unlocks a door, a map key unlocks the map. This does not necessarily mean that all maps in planning or regional design have a key. There is an abundance of maps which are not ‘unlocked’ through a legend but through a supporting explanation in a text or storyline. This combination can be very powerful (Van Dijk 2011).

Mapping as part of a design strategy is not necessarily to depict possible or desired futures. Design through mapping can also have *understanding* as its prime goal, to grasp for instance the structure of a region or how a region is positioned in its wider setting and what determines this position. Whatever sort of mapping is applied, according to Corner: ‘the function of mapping is less to mirror reality than to engender the re-shaping of the worlds in which people live’. In fact ‘mapping is the most formative and creative act of any design process, firstly disclosing and then staging the conditions for the emergence of new realities’ (Corner 2011). Corner calls this the *agency* of mapping. However, in which direction map agency works is not easy to foresee: ‘designers’ of visualizations and maps, ‘like designers of anything, cannot anticipate all the ways people will understand and use their design’ (Tversky 2019, 193).

Graphic Design

Maps created in design processes usually do not follow clear standards like, for instance, atlas makers do. For this reason the possible choices map designers can take are bewildering. Let us

discuss a few possibilities (in words). A key choice is the frame of the map: where does a map begin or end? What kind of cropping? An example how this might work: a map in the 2001 Dutch Fifth spatial planning report shows Europe with a range of squares and rectangles on top of each other, each shape, each cropping stands for a different set of planning and design issues (Ministerie van VROM 2001, 10–11). So planning in connection to the North Sea and its coast (OMA 2008) is about different issues compared with for instance a frame which connects the Netherlands with Belgium or the Flanders Region (De Vries 2015).

Closely connected to cropping or framing is the use of scale. Most maps in regional design take the perspective from the air. On an intermediate scale the projection can be tilted: the bird's eye view, heavily used in urban design with some famous examples like the Le Corbusier's 1920s plan for Paris.¹ Rotation can also vary. North has become standard but sometimes the rotation is deliberately turned around. Van Duinen's chapter in this volume presents an example: a map of the Dutch *Deltametropolis* is turned around about 90 degrees clockwise, showing a massive landmass criss-crossed by rivers at one side and a 'seamass' at the opposite side, an interesting combination of cropping and manipulating projection.

The combination of frame, scale, projection and rotation together is called the *field* by James Corner:

The design and set-up of the field is perhaps one of the most creative acts in mapping, for as a prior system of organization it will inevitably condition how and what observations are made and presented.

(Corner 2011, 94)

Designers have a lot to choose from when the field is determined. Dots, lines and planes belong to the basic graphic language but even then a lot of decisions can be taken. There are some regularities, though. For instance, cities and towns, depending on scale, are often pictured like circles. Presumed relations among cities are visualized through lines between the spheres. This causes visualizations of urban networks to resemble the way molecules are visualized in chemistry text books.

Typically, spatial design maps today are created with graphic computer programs, which give them in general a smooth character. There is one class of maps which is nearly always made by a spatial designer, namely hand-drawn maps. They have become quite exceptional though as many regional design maps are made as the outcome of political discussions while hand-drawn maps are regularly produced in earlier phases of such discussions. Drawing, so holding a pencil, is seen by some (Palmboom 2018, Lyn and Dulaney 2009) as powerful as it brings the designer close to the design object in a state of 'reflective conversation with the situation' (Schön 1983).

Mapping New Planning Regions

Anxiety for the Unbound Region

Discussions about possible changes in the administrative structure of a country are in general strongly influenced by spatial developments, in particular urban change. An approach to deal with these issues is to adjust the administrative structure of the country together with the creation of competences at the levels(s) on which problems occur. Various concrete strategies are possible (for a categorization of practices in various countries: OECD 2015). Sometimes one particular urban region, often the capital region as the fastest growing area, is taken out of the general administrative structure of the country and gets a particular metropolitan status. As such

a change is in many cases arranged by a *lex specialis* it is relatively easy to dismantle the metropolitan region for all sorts of (political) reasons. In Europe, examples are the Greater London Council, established in 1965 and abolished 20 years later, and the Greater Copenhagen Council, which was abolished in the same period for similar political reasons.

This shows that although there might be urgent spatial issues calling for governance capacity at regional scales, adapting the administrative structure of a country is not easy. According to Salet no formal re-arrangement of (local) government can keep with up the speed of spatial and urban change so it is not really worth to try (Salet 2003). Others point at more fundamental reasons. Painter calls the search for 'regionality' through adaptation of formal administrative structures 'cartographic anxiety', a sort of social-psychological fear that there may be no fixed foundations such as borders and that territory and space seem no longer mappable, understandable or (in terms of planning) manageable (Painter 2008, 349).

Out of anxiety for the unbound region there is a deliberate search to define regions and territories through clear perimeters and to create new cartographies (see Faludi elsewhere in this volume). Is there a way out? Following the Finnish regional geographer Anssi Paasi, Painter calls for institutionalization in the sense of 'the establishing or production of a region' (Painter 2008, 349) while at the same time avoiding restricting the definition of region to any particular scale, as with a few exceptions a region is seldom a 'bounded whole' (Painter 2008, 356). We will now discuss a few examples of mapping strategies aiming to institutionalize regional governance capacity and discuss the *agency* of such mapping.

Framing

A historic example of nearly a century ago concerns an area which is currently known as the Dutch Randstad, the horseshoe shaped non-contiguous urban agglomeration with (roughly speaking) Amsterdam, Utrecht, Rotterdam and The Hague as cornerstones. In 1924 a Dutch planner presented a map which is generally considered as the very first visualization of the Randstad, although this metaphor was not yet in use. A vintage GIS map prepared by Van Lohuizen presents population growth of municipalities in the west of the country during the 1869–1920 period (Van der Valk 1990). The map shows a sort of ring of cities and towns with high growth figures surrounding an area with hardly any growth at all. The map was used to call for some sort of regional planning (see Figure 23.2).

Apart from what is on the map, the key element is its rectangular *frame*. This is the true invention made by Van Lohuizen. Within this frame one finds the half circle of spaces undergoing basically the same development for which in those days no term existed yet.² Situated within the frame there is what we may call a regional action space of which the exact perimeter is rather loosely indicated by the frame of the map.

Map frames are easily overlooked as every map needs to 'end' somewhere. However, where to position the frame is a key choice. This example clearly shows there is a relation between map frames and *framing*. As the map was part of a 1924 exhibition and conference about regional development the 'central organizing idea' (Gamson and Lasch 1983) was obvious to all participants and put on paper by others in later stages: regional plans are needed but these go beyond the capacities and competences of municipalities. For this reason governance capacity needs to be created in a different way either through the creation of new planning regions or the creation of statutory competences at the level of the (existing) provinces (Van der Valk 1990). Obviously this is a clear call for new public norms about spatial development.

In the 1950s Van Lohuizen became involved in a 'Working Commission' to prepare advice to the Dutch national government on the future of the urban structure of the west of the

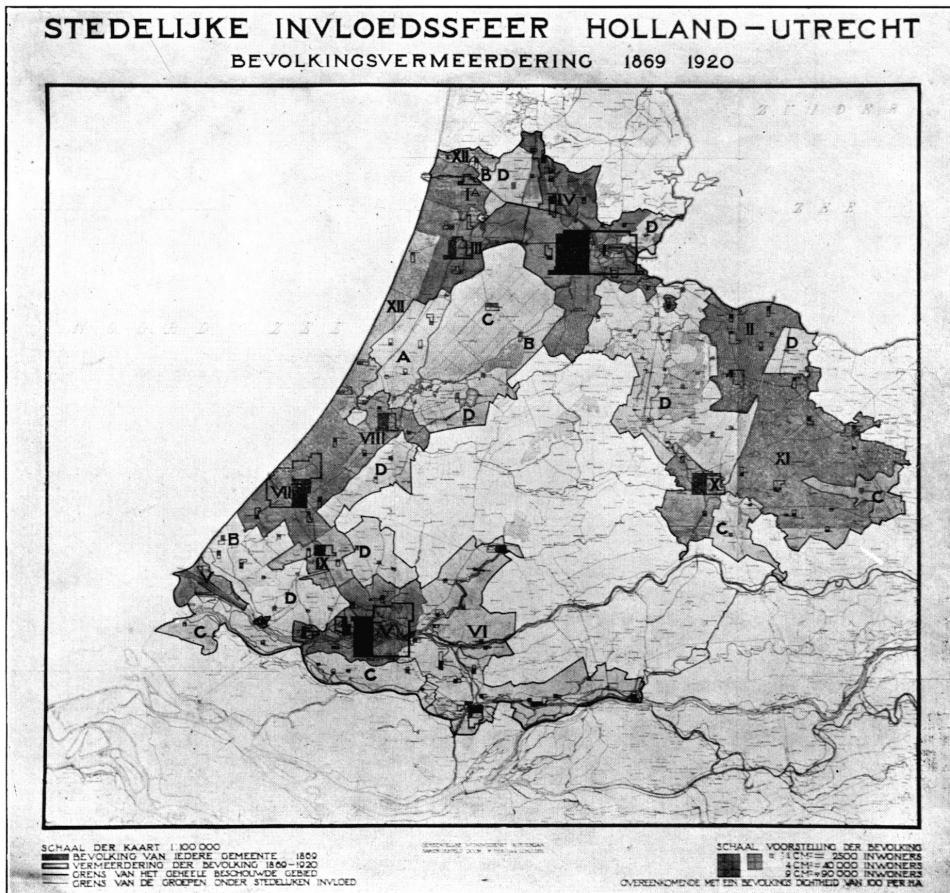


Figure 23.2 The very first visualization of the Randstad avant la letter by Th.K. van Lohuizen
Source: Van der Valk (1990).

country. The immediate postwar period was a period of massive growth combined with a serious shortage of houses. The actual ‘technical work’ for the Working Commission (regarded as something outside the political domain) was done by a bureau led by Van Lohuizen (Faludi and Van der Valk 1994). The containment of the urban growth of what from that moment on was named as the Randstad Holland became the guiding principle of Dutch planning in the decades to come. A closure of the Randstad circle of cities and the filling up of the open space in the middle was to be prevented at all costs.

In the 1958 advisory report of the Working Commission the Randstad scheme was mapped in three different ways, in fact an archetypal range of maps. First of all through a map *diagram* which in a bold visual language defines the Randstad through a simple circle. This is a simplification as the Randstad cities are not located in such a way that together they form a circle. In fact there is a rather large gap between Rotterdam and Utrecht, certainly 60 years ago. Obviously such a detail would have weakened the agency of the map: in the middle of the circle is a large open space which can only be maintained if the Randstad would grow in an outward direction.



Figure 23.3 A diagram which highly schematically shows the desired growth of the Randstad away from its 'Green Heart'

Source: WWDL (1958).

At a certain distance from the 'old' cities a second circle of (new) towns should develop. This map (Figure 23.3) clearly shows what Tversky (2019, 238) calls the advantage of diagrams over texts: 'diagrams are a more direct mapping of meaning than words'. To add weight to the diagram it was printed on the cover of the advisory report.

The second map (Figure 23.4) is what may be called a conceptual map. It shows a somewhat more detailed image of the actual structure of the Randstad compared with the diagram, a stronger *correspondence* with reality, but the visual language is that of a sketch: highly stylized and leaving out a lot of detail. The principle idea expressed by this map is that the Randstad is formed by urban agglomerations which need to be interspersed by open spaces. The metaphor here is that of *buffer zones*, to prevent that cities would collide. In geographical and planning terms: to prevent the formation of large, contiguous 'conurbations'.

A third image which we do not show for reasons of space, is a much more precise map. It shows rather clearly the morphology of the Randstad around 1980 and through the symbol of a square the preferred location of *nieuwe steden* (new towns) in the second 'ring' of the diagram. What this map primarily depicts are what were considered necessary operational decisions: a master plan which, according to the makers, should function as a guide towards decision-making for the decades to come.



Figure 23.4 Conceptual image of the desired morphology of the Randstad

Source: WWDL (1958).

How effective have these maps been along with the entire *story* of the advisory report in which they appeared? With hindsight one may conclude: very effective. We are obviously dealing with an example of what Throgmorton (1996, 2003) calls ‘planning as persuasive storytelling about the future’. In fact the whole Dutch national system of planning for about 30 to 40 years has been built upon this story to such an extent that some speak in terms of a ‘planning doctrine’ (Faludi and Van der Valk 1994). Serious criticism arose in the 1990s: the role of national government became contested as well as the spatial concepts on which national policy was grounded. Different designs were proposed, for instance a new interpretation of the spatial structure of the west of the country under the heading of *Deltametropolis* (see Van Duinen elsewhere in this volume). The battle has been fought with text, images and novel perceptions of governance in general and national government’s role in particular.

Framing a Metropolitan Region

In the Netherlands the main driver for cartographic anxiety was quintessentially spatial, as in many other countries across the globe: integration processes at regional scales. Options

discussed in the Netherlands ranged from splitting up provinces (the middle administrative level of the country) so they would become genuine ‘regional’, to voluntary/mandatory cooperation between municipalities based on the so-called Joint Regulations Act from 1950. This act opens up the possibility of cooperation between provinces, municipalities and water boards, but without directly elected councils: the watershed with a full-blown administrative layer (Spaans, Zonneveld and Stead 2021). Around 2006 the process started to create, step-by-step, eight urban regions with distinct planning competences. However, less than 10 years later, parliament and government came back to this decision. All eight regions were abolished in 2015. This shows the vulnerable political basis of asymmetric solutions which sit somewhere between the standard, countrywide administrative layers. A major reason for giving back competences to provinces and municipalities was the perceived lack of democratic legitimacy (OECD 2017) although this was not a dominant issue when they were created. Some sort of cooperation continues though. This goes under the heading of ‘metropolitan region’.

Probably the best example is the Metropolitan Region Amsterdam (MRA), ‘metropolitan’ obviously a discursive claim that the area performs as such. In the MRA case framing, in the sense of creating perspectives on how to understand or perceive a particular, complex situation (Rein and Schön 1993), is particularly important as there is an imperative to show relevance, in particular to keep its membership (32 municipalities, two provinces) together. On the MRA website there is a strong emphasis on the region as a *daily urban system*, a space forming a coherent area for its inhabitants.³ Imagery plays a role as well. In early 2008, after a year of intense debates, conferences, and a design studio, a 138-page vision document was published (MRA 2008). Its key image (see Figure 23.5) served as a kind of logo for the following years (Förster et al. 2016). What is interesting is how the perimeters of the MRA are imaged. In fact they are not: the ellipse suggests indicatively where the region is located while the five smaller, half ellipses together with the stylized infrastructural connections show areas highly connected



Figure 23.5 Image of spatial integration in the MRA area and the direction of main external relations

Source: MRA (2008).

to the ‘heartland’ of the MRA. Dots, lines, planes and other symbols show projects to be taken up in the period 2010–2030.

Mapping Controversies

In this chapter we are interested in plans and maps which set out directions for future development for larger areas and how this contributes to governance capacity building. If ‘maps are the bread and butter of [regional] spatial planning’ (Faludi 1996), it would be interesting to look at cases where plans go without maps. Why is that? Because maps hinder capacity building? Or is it the other way around: problems with capacity building are reflected in map-making processes and thus in spatial visions about desired future development expressed in maps? First, we zoom out by looking at Europe and then zoom in on the present, new phase in Dutch national planning.

Planning Beyond National Boundaries

Much has been written about the 1999 European Spatial Development Perspectives (ESDP) compiled by the then 15 member states of the European Union together with the European Commission. Faludi elsewhere in this volume points out that all maps which could be read in a (geo)political sort of way were erased from drafts. We may explain this by looking at a key difference between words and maps. Whereas verbal planning concepts in policy documents can be subject to a multitude of interpretations helped by euphemisms and other elastic sorts of language, cartographic representations of space and territory are much more direct and consequently require a higher degree of consensus (Dühr 2006, see also Faludi 2002). A text is basically a cloud of words which needs to be read sentence by sentence. A lot can be hidden in the space between the lines. Also, while a text has to be read sequentially, a map can be read as a whole. Any sort of message immediately jumps to the foreground.

So the ESDP is an example of a plan (defined very broadly) without policy maps, maps which typically show desired spatial development or a desired spatial structure or morphology. This should not come as a surprise though. Only a few planning systems have some experience with fuzzy, conceptual maps (Dühr 2006). The follow-up of the ESDP, the 2011 so-called ‘Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020’ (see Faludi 2009, Walsh 2012) does not contain any map or any sort of spatial imagery. This also counts for the revised version, the 2019 ‘Draft Territorial Agenda 2030’.

Although geopolitical mapping is rather sensitive at the European level, there are examples of such mapping at the transnational level. At the end of the 1990s several transnational visioning processes run parallel to each other as part of the EU INTERREG program, directed towards cooperation across national borders (Dühr, Colomb and Nadin 2010). An example is the 2000 spatial vision for the so-called North West Metropolitan Area or NWMA (Jensen and Richardson 2004, Zonneveld 2005, Dühr 2006). Another is the Atlantic Spatial Development Perspective (Farthing and Carrière 2007). In both vision-making processes, the step was taken which the makers of the ESDP did not take: a spatial vision on the transnational level articulated through a map with a bold sort of visual language. Although the exact visual languages differ, there is great similarity between what is on the maps: a strong emphasis on the competitiveness of cities and urban regions and a selection of those cities and urban networks which are regarded as particularly competitive.

That in both vision processes politically sensitive maps were created has something to do with the smaller size of the area and the smaller number of stakeholders. This made the vision

processes more manageable as there was less political diversity amongst participants. In both processes there was also ample room for professional expertise and a greater trust in such expertise. In contrast with that, every step in the ESDP process was the object of negotiation while the group of people working on the ESDP constantly changed according to which country organized a next ministerial meeting.⁴ Interestingly, in another transnational vision-making process, namely NorVision (the spatial vision for the North Sea Region), map-making was explicitly dispensed with. The project leader of NorVision makes clear why the authors of this document which was finalized in 2000 have opted for a purely verbal interpretation for the presentation of policy through what are somewhat strangely called ‘verbal visionary pictures’ (Thornaes 2000, 61). A cartographic representation of territorial structures is nothing more than a ‘fixed picture of a certain future spatial structural situation’ (ibid.). This represents a fear that any kind of map of a (transnational) area may give the impression of a master plan.

The New Dutch Planning: Policy Sectors Versus Planning

The Netherlands has a tradition of national plan making going back to 1960, when government published its first report on spatial planning. That report contained only ‘verbal visionary pictures’ which translated the images of the 1958 advisory report discussed above. Since the 1966 Second report every government planning report contained policy maps. Sometimes these policy maps were highly conceptual, as in the 1966 and 2000 Fifth report. In other reports there was a much higher level of detail, which gave more direct guidance towards lower levels of government.

From the 2000 Fifth report onward, national government adapted the underlying governance philosophy into the direction of ever more decentralization and deregulation. The 2012 National Policy Strategy for Infrastructure and Spatial Planning (Ministerie van IenM 2012) very clearly minimizes planning at the national level in favor of sectoral policies, especially economic and infrastructure policy (Zonneveld and Evers 2014). Concepts aiming for what used to be called *ruimtelijke kwaliteit* (spatial quality) like the Green Heart and the objective of spatial quality itself were explicitly denounced as no longer reflecting national interests. Local government should take care of this.

In 2014 government announced a drastic overhaul of all laws related to what is called the physical environment. The objective is to integrate 33 existing laws (partially or entirely) into one single act: the Environment and Planning Act. Main objectives are simplification and (again) deregulation as well as decentralization. The act is supposed to take effect in 2022.

A new (planning) act means a novel type of national policy document. Around mid-2019 a draft of the ‘National Strategy on Spatial Planning and the Environment’ was published (in Dutch: *Nationale Omgevingsvisie*; see: Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations 2019). The publication of this draft was delayed for several years, largely due to a great deal of uncertainty about its content and sometimes fierce discussions between government departments as the strategy is supposed to become integrative far more than any other previous national strategy or policy report. The strategy is based on four key objectives called priorities. How these priorities come together on the ground in specific territories is not made clear yet. Interestingly, all the maps which can be found in the strategy could no longer be made by the coordinating ministry or any other governmental service. The necessary expertise was lost in consecutive cycles of reorganizing the administrative fabric of national government. The entire cartography was made by the Deltametropolis Association (*Vereniging Deltametropool*), the non-profit organization which was behind the pleas to adopt the Deltametropolis concept in national policy around the turn of the century (see Van Duinen elsewhere in this volume). So for the first time since 1960 there is a (planning and environment) report without policy maps. Although the English title of

the draft strategy includes ‘planning’, the Dutch title does not. In fact one may doubt whether there is anything left of spatial planning at national level. In this context the absence of genuine planning maps should not come as a surprise. It is a clear indication of a rather restrained interpretation of the relevance of (national) spatial planning.

Conclusion

The introduction of this chapter proposed to look at mapping as a kind of bridge or hinge which connects institutional design and spatial design. In other words, as a tool to create governance capacity at regional levels. Cases have been presented and discussed to provide evidence for this proposition. The creation of a simple map of what later became known as the Randstad in the early 1920s was such a case. Initially the storyline in which this map was embedded seemed to fall on deaf ears. National government did not create a Randstad planning authority nor was it willing to hand over such competences to the Dutch middle administrative layer that already existed, the provinces. In fact at no point in history a Randstad metropolitan authority was created. It was national government which took the lead through the political acceptance and adoption of a late 1950s advisory report. The maps which this report contained were quite simple in their visual language – one basically a diagram, while the other was highly conceptual – but nevertheless instrumental for the political acceptance of national government taking a clear role in guiding spatial development. However, maps alone are (probably) never decisive to bring about regional governance capacity. Maps plus other visuals are *part* of a story which also includes an instrumental layer such as competences, guidelines, judicial rules and/or budgets. If this layer is not activated and used in practice, there will be no patterning of public norms.

The creation of metropolitan regions in the Netherlands in recent years tells a somewhat different story about the role of mapping. Here maps do not function as *input* but as the *output* of the creation of regional governance capacity. In the case of the Metropolitan Region Amsterdam this happened through collaborative arrangements between municipalities which together form a planning region. Such arrangements are known in literature as soft spaces, hence soft planning (Allmendinger and Haughton 2009). In case such collaboration proves to be enduring, maps can serve as *input* for further cooperation as shown by the example of the Metropolitan Region Amsterdam.

Under the heading of ‘mapping controversies’ we have also come across cases where maps create conflict. The 1990s ESDP trajectory proved to be such a case. Countries with very different planning systems, including countries where maps are only used in zoning plans compared with countries with a tradition of regional design and conceptual maps (such as the Netherlands) or spatial scenario making (such as France), tried to make a sort of joint planning guidance. With hindsight one may conclude the makers of the ESDP should have limited themselves to ‘verbal visionary pictures’. We have also come across transnational visions which did contain planning policy maps but a clear-cut arena where such maps could guide policy making was in fact not there. At best the visions and the maps they contained could inspire the participating countries and regions for their policies. Interestingly, the Netherlands which is widely known as one of the very few countries with a rather comprehensive system of *national* planning recently produced a planning strategy which for the very first time in decades did not contain any sort of indicative policy map, in spite of a long tradition of spatial and regional design.

What this chapter seeks to make clear is that in planning and plan-making text, images and maps ought to be regarded as a whole, even when a plan only contains verbal visionary pictures. In such a case it becomes imperative to find out why (certain) images and maps were not used or even avoided. Images need to be unraveled just like a text. What particular visual

language has been used? Which symbols and colors? Which projection, what scale or which 'frame'? What norms and values do images and maps represent? Who are the protagonists or adversaries? Did professional spatial designers play a role? Did a certain map or visualization have agency and was there a contribution to the political acceptance and patterning of public norms? Any sort of analysis of a planning process where plan maps are simply used as illustrations in a journal paper or book chapter without any sort of clarification will most likely miss some critical issues.

Notes

1. Raising controversies right up to the present, particularly that the Paris 'Le Plan Voisin' should be regarded as a fascist plan; see Brott 2017.
2. The untranslatable term *buiten wonen* was often used, meaning somewhat like 'living outside'.
3. See for instance: www.amsterdam.nl/bestuur-organisatie/volg-beleid/ontwikkeling/metropoolregio/ (in Dutch), accessed 10 June April 2020.
4. The process followed the sequence of the presidencies of the European Union which goes from one country to another country each period of six months.

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