EVALUATING THE STRATEGIC CAPACITY OF COLLABORATIVE SPATIAL PLANNING INITIATIVES BY THE PERFORMANCE OF ITS PROCESS, OUTPUT AND OUTCOMES: THE CASE OF THE SOUTHERN RANDSTAD HOLLAND

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Abstract

Spatial planning practices are constantly evolving to be more effective in a dynamic context. In the face of the latest developments, the practice of collaborative spatial planning through the formation of regional collaborations has emerged as the contemporary solution. The practice of working with a multitude of public actors that cooperate to formulate spatial strategies for issues that transcend their own planning capacity is relatively new and the ideal structure, organization and scope are yet unclear. The ability to of a region to successfully develop joint strategies is referred to as a region's strategic capacity.

As a means for comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of such collaboration projects an evaluation framework is proposed to assess a region's strategic capacity. To this end, the paper further elaborates the concept of strategic capacity. And furthermore it develops an evaluation framework specifically designed for the evaluation of regional collaborations and the strategic capacity generated. It is shown that this framework has a high potential for meaningful evaluation of regional planning collaboration projects.

Keywords: planning evaluation, collaborative spatial planning, strategic capacity

1   Introduction

In the face of geographic, social and economic dynamics, Dutch spatial planning has gone through significant change from a comprehensive planning approach to a more open-ended and decentralised collaborative spatial planning style in which there is a key role for networks of like-minded governments. The collaborative spatial planning effort is one of common ambitions, goals and resources across different tiers of government, integrating policy fields and territories (Healey, 2006; Albrechts, 2010; Mastop & Faludi, 1997; Sehested, 2009). Such regional collaborations seek to align their efforts to effectively steer regional development to their joint benefit.

In the last few years, regional collaborations between different tiers of government and even market parties have emerged as the contemporary spatial planning practice (Salet & Woltjer, 2009). The changes in spatial planning practice have made old roles of government obsolete and responsibilities have shifted. Numerous regional collaborations in one form or another have popped up across the

Netherlands. Since the collaborative practice is relatively new, the numerous regional collaborations individually attempt to find the right organization, size and scope. However, best practices have not yet been identified (Hajer, 2009), and may in fact not exist due to specific contextual circumstances requiring situational solutions and approaches. Yet, whatever the exact outcome, evaluation of the effectiveness of regional collaborations may be helpful in developing a frame of reference for developing effective institutional arrangements within regional collaborations. However, an appropriate and complete evaluation framework is not yet available. This paper offers a first attempt to develop a framework for the evaluation of regional collaborations and as such forms a first step towards the development of such a frame of reference for best practices.

The paper starts with brief overview of trends in Dutch spatial planning practice. This is followed by the introduction of the methodology used to develop the evaluation framework to assess the effectiveness of a regional collaboration. The key theoretical concept along which this evaluation framework is developed is strategic capacity, a concept originally introduced by Haran (2010). This capacity, which captures a range of single indicators and regional network characteristics, refers to a region's ability to come to joint strategies and decision making. After elaborating the developed framework, the application of the framework on the regional collaboration between the national government and the so-called Zuidvleugel partners in the southern Randstad Holland is discussed. More specifically one of the concrete outputs of this collaboration is discussed: the Adaptive Agenda Southern Randstad (AASR). The paper concludes with a short evaluation of the use of the framework and recommendations for its further development.

2 Spatial planning in the Netherlands: overcoming the institutional void

Before the 90's, the spatial planning decisions at the national and regional level mostly involved restrictive regulation (Salet & Woltjer, 2009). According to Ark (2005), the Dutch planning system could, until the second half of the 00's, be characterized by a strict delineation between government departments, a strong territorial orientation, formal relations between different tiers of government and plans that focus on a single aspect of space. However, over time, economic and social dynamics put pressure on these protective regulations and strict delineation gradually lost ground (Raad van State, 2012).

In society, the citizen-actor is on the rise. Active involvement at select moments in the design process are used to increase citizen approval rates and legitimization of projects and investments (Hajer, 2003; Witteveen+Bos, 2012). Regions are becoming more important in current spatial policy making. Many policy issues are simply better solved at a regional level with optimal use of resources (Hajer & Zonneveld, 2000). The globalization and the EU lead to more permeable borders and due to the development of networks, territories are becoming more interconnected (Raad van State, 2012; Balz & Zonneveld, 2012). The economic crisis has further increased the urgency of collaboration between parties due to lacking financial resources (Boelens, 2010; Herrschel & Tallberg, 2011).

The changing context brings with it new demands in terms of governability and the mobilisation of stakeholders. One interpretation of governance is the self-regulation of actors in a network to *"coordinate their interdependencies in order to realise public policies and deliver public services"* (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2012, pp. 594). With regard to governance, several trends affecting spatial planning are identified by Anders Lidström (2007; 2011). These trends show that (national) governments are gradually changing their role from regulator to facilitator, thereby strengthening lower levels of government and decentralizing parts of their responsibilities. Reflecting the changing society a new Spatial Planning Act (2008) has done away with the formal hierarchy between governmental layers, introduces decentralisation and provincial autonomy, and by handing land use plan competencies to all governmental levels opened the way for more entrepreneurial and bottom up planning approaches (Buitelaar et al., 2011; Roodbol-Mekkes & Van der Valk, 2012).

The current development in spatial planning is the formation of regional collaborations in which a multitude of (public) interdependent actors (Healey, 2006; Albrechts, 2010) cooperate for purposes of

regional development. This is called collaborative spatial planning or strategic spatial planning (Healey, 2006; Albrechts, 2010; Mastop & Faludi, 1997; Sehested, 2009). In this paper, the practice of spatial planning for the purpose of spatial-economic development within an informal regional collaboration of actors by aligning their goals, ambitions and resources (Zuidvleugelbureau, 2013; SNN, 2014), is referred to as collaborative spatial planning (CSP). Parties can steer the practice of working in CSP networks, otherwise known as meta-governance (Sehested, 2009).

In the traditional top down spatial planning system, the institutional arrangements are clearly established. The roles and responsibilities of each government have been the same for decades. When governments start to participate in regional collaborations to achieve their policy goals, they move into an as of yet unknown planning arena in which the role and responsibility division is undecided. This 'in between' arena in which most CSP initiatives function is dubbed soft space by Allmendinger and Haughton (2009).

The institutional arrangements within these soft spaces with often having fuzzy boundaries are far from established and many different arrangements are set loose on CSP initiatives. Hajer (2009) refers to this as the institutional void – i.e. it is not that there are no institutions at the regional level, yet in the 'void' there are so many institutions and stakeholders that it has become unclear how they best relate to each other. New initiatives are formed and old initiatives evolve in the ongoing search for the right form of collaboration (Edelenbos, 2005). Over the course of years, widespread variations of often thematically overlapping regional collaborations have been established in the same geographic regions (in the southern Randstad: Public Partnership Zuidvleugel, Metropolitan Region Rotterdam The Hague and city regions).

Due to the multitude of initiatives, structures and forms, the optimal organization of CSP initiatives remains unclear. The question of how effective the efforts of regional collaborations are is therefore highly relevant in order to come to best practices for the optimal organization of such CSP initiatives. Addressing this question is currently not possible, as there is no adequate evaluation framework to assess regional collaborations as sketched above on. In this paper, such a framework is presented.

3   Research method

This paper focuses on the strategic capacity of the regional collaboration between the national government and the Zuidvleugel partners in the southern Randstad. Because there is little experience with assessing regional collaborative spatial planning practices, the main aim of this paper concerns the development of an appropriate evaluation framework for the assessment of the regional collaboration through the performance of its results.

Although the concept of strategic capacity of Haran (2010) as we will find out below, is very relevant for regional collaborations, the original framework by Haran is found to have several deficiencies. On the basis of a literature review (Haran, 2010; Mastop & Faludi, 1997; Faludi, 2000; De Bruijn et al., 2010) and an exploration into the nature of the regional collaboration and its product under investigation (Harteveld, 2014), these deficiencies were identified. The inclusion of the work of other spatial planning evaluation theorists (Mandarano, 2008; Margerum, 2002; Innes & Booher, 2003; Healey, 1998; Briassoulis, 2004) was done to ensure an enriched framework that results in a comprehensive overview of the most important (according to these theorists) indicators for effective spatial planning.

The actual case study was carried by means of participatory research way with the principle author having the opportunity to participate in the process for half a year from within the leading stakeholder's organisation, in this case the urban development department of the city of Rotterdam. The case study was carried out partly during the development of the enriched framework and after. Information on the nature of the collaboration and the results themselves was gathered and processed through a review of the available information sources. These sources include but are not limited to websites, law descriptions, the product itself and written reports about meetings, but also semi-

structured interviews with the process managers and a select group of participants in the process as well as, finally, observation.

The interviewees have all been involved in the collaborative planning process, either at the administrative, directive or workgroup level or as a process manager. Criteria for selection included level of personal involvement, position in the process and scope of knowledge on the goings on in the process and 'in house'.

Two interview schemes have been developed. The first was prepared for the process managers who designed and managed the process. The second aimed at the experiences and opinions of the participants with regard to the process and results. The interviews with the process managers were semi-structured leaning more towards the structured side. The reason for this is that with regard to the process design, there were several indicators which would help determine how the process was designed, what the reasoning behind it was and how it played out. The interviews with the participants of the process were semi-structured leaning more towards the un-structured side. The focus was on the experiences and assessments of the process, the output and the outcome. Since experiences are variable, an open structure was sometimes deemed more appropriate for this set of interviews.

Finally, theory and empirical findings were processed and interpreted, after which general conclusions on the strategic capacity per component could be drawn. The use of the framework was also evaluated based on the experiences during the case study. From these experiences, weaknesses and strengths were identified, resulting in recommendations for further development of the enriched framework. These strengths, weaknesses and recommendations form the conclusion of this paper.

4 Development of the evaluation framework: the concept of Strategic Capacity

Strategic capacity forms the overarching concept of the evaluation framework. The concept gives direction and context to the evaluation of the effectiveness of the CSP initiative in the southern Randstad. Haran (2010, pp. 37) defines strategic capacity as: *"[the] capacity to involve a wide number of stakeholders while producing well-defined strategies with high selectivity and internal coherency, and bringing those to implementation while maintaining the support and commitment of collaborating members."* Strategic capacity thus focusses on the effectiveness of a regional collaboration.

Haran has conducted an evaluation in of the Metropolitan Region Amsterdam, Brabant City and the City Region Arnhem Nijmegen using his framework for strategic capacity evaluation. This framework is presented in Table 1. These collaborations are comparable to the collaboration selected for this paper: they are informal, contain interdependent parties and aim to strengthen the socio-economic situation in their territories through the formulation of ambitions in spatial strategies.

Table 1 Evaluation framework of Haran (2010)

Components	Haran's indicators
1 Reception	• Actor diversity • Intensity of involvement • Diversity/multiplicity sectors • Incorporation of knowledge
2 Consolidation	• Well-defined/ integrated strategies • Collective lobbying • Collective internal investments
3 Realization	• Official commitments of external parties • Official commitments of internal parties

The definition and selection of evaluation subjects reflect, at first glance, the purpose of the regional collaboration in the Southern Randstad. Strategic capacity is an interesting approach for the evaluation of the effectiveness of regional collaborations. Its greatest merit is the premise that a wider group of

committed stakeholders is able to implement strategies. Incidentally, the components and indicators of strategic capacity are broad enough to further specify their definitions to create a framework that is more comprehensive and useable.

4.1   Reassessing Strategic Capacity

One of the main problems of Haran's (2010) framework for analyzing the Southern Randstad case is that it does not foresee in the cooperation between regional and national stakeholders. This section will explain a number of further deficiencies to create a better understanding of the type of enrichment that is needed to operationalize the framework for the evaluation of this paper's regional collaboration case.

A first problem is that the framework does not do justice to the regional collaboration process. The attention paid to the process design and management is, at best, limited. This can be concluded from the indicators under the component *reception* as seen in Table 1. A high quality process is more likely to result in high quality outputs and outcomes (De Bruijn, Ten Heuvelhof, & In 't Veld, 2010; Margerum, 2002).

Secondly, the framework provides little handholds for evaluating regional collaborations. Regional collaborations are continuously evolving, making delineation of the evaluation difficult. Additionally, the indicators offered by Haran (2010) are abstract. This makes that the framework is difficult to apply as a means to assess and compare the effectiveness of collaborations. Further operationalization of the framework will give better guidance and allows for stricter delineation of the evaluation.

Thirdly, empirical research into the case of the regional collaboration between the national government and the Zuidvleugel partners has shown that there are in fact important differences between this case and the cases of Haran. The Southern Randstad collaboration is directed by the MIRT program of the national government. It is a means of meta-governance as practiced by the Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment (Zonneveld & Spaans 2014). The regional collaborations evaluated by Haran are collaborations between governments of the region and without the national government practicing meta-governance. Another difference is that the collaboration aims to formulate a spatial strategy, rather than concrete plans. The focus of this case is on strategic issues, more in particular on the Adaptive Agenda Southern Randstad (AASR, see: Rijk & Zuidvleugelpartners 2013).

Fourthly, there is a gap between policy making and implementation, in a sense that implementation is not always straightforward. The collaboration will have to be effective in creating commitment to the produced strategies. The reason for this is that within a regional collaboration, responsibilities, tasks and resources are not predefined. Agreements will have to be carried out by the individual participants.

These deficiencies are not unsolvable and with the help of contemporary planning evaluation theory, they can be managed.

4.2   Enriching the framework: performance theory

Traditionally, planning effectiveness was studied from the viewpoint of conformance (Faludi, 2000), referring to the level in which the original intentions were carried through to the final result (Knudsen, 1988 in: Korthals Altes, 2008, pp. 13). Lately, other methods for evaluation of spatial planning approaches have emerged. The focus shifted to performance, which is more abstract in nature (Faludi, 2000; Innes & Booher, 2003). This shift in evaluation methods is in line with the

shift in planning practice itself. From hierarchical prescriptive planning by a single government towards collaborative spatial planning by a network of governments. With regard to the AASR and spatial strategies like it, depending on follow-up decision making over a long period of time, conformance evaluation is not an option.

The performance of spatial strategies can be understood as the influence the results of the strategy development have on subsequent decision situations (Mastop & Faludi, 1997). Performance defines two forms of effectiveness for the results: 1) being relevant in subsequent decision situations and 2) being accepted in subsequent decision situations (Mastop & Faludi (1997) and Faludi (2000)). Thus, deviation from the spatial strategy does not necessarily mean the strategy is ineffective as long as it remains relevant in subsequent decision situations (Faludi, 2000).

It is understood that Mastop and Faludi and particularly Faludi (2000) also include the process that led to the formulation of the spatial strategy under evaluation. They see planning as a soft process of learning and "*seemingly endless multifarious negotiations*" (Faludi, 2000, pp. 299) before results emerge.

Thus, it can be concluded that performance as understood by Mastop and Faludi refers to the results of the collaboration process and the process itself. There is a relation between process and result. A high quality process is more likely to result in effective results and effective results will create more commitment to the process (Margerum, 2002). Please refer to Figure 1.
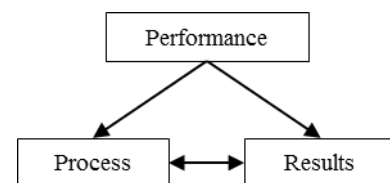

Figure 1 The relation between performance, process and results

The first factor influencing the performance of the spatial strategy is the process leading to the final strategy. The formulation of a spatial strategy is a complex process: a multitude of actors and perceptions are involved, no optimal solution is possible, the context is dynamic in time and multiple issues need to be addressed (De Bruijn, Ten Heuvelhof, & In 't Veld, 2010). It makes it all the more important to evaluate the process and determining how and where procedures can be improved: "*Process-like arrangements have consistently proven to be crucial for success*" (De Bruijn, Ten Heuvelhof, & In 't Veld, 2010, pp. 11).

The second factor of influencing the performance is the quality of the results of the process. The process serves as the breeding ground for not only spatial strategies such as the Adaptive Agenda Southern Randstad (AASR), but also for social effects such as improved relations between participants and commitment of external and internal parties to the agreed upon strategies (Innes & Booher, 1999; Mandarano, 2008). These results should, as discussed earlier, either be relevant for subsequent decision situations or reflect the potential for the realization of the ambitions defined by the regional collaboration.

By using performance evaluation for the enrichment of Haran's evaluation framework, two of the deficiencies previously discussed can be solved. First, it includes process considerations in the evaluation and recognizes its influence on the quality of the results of a collaboration process. Secondly, it allows for stricter delineation of the evaluation as performance evaluation revolves around the specific result of a process. Spatial strategies, such as the AASR, can function as the result that delineates the evaluation. Other deficiencies can be solved with the help of slight adaptions to Haran's original definitions.

4.3 Relating strategic capacity to performance

The concept of performance is appropriate for the enrichment of Haran's strategic capacity evaluation framework. The difference between the concept of strategic capacity and performance is their object. The objects are, respectively, a regional collaboration and a spatial strategy.

Strategic capacity can be evaluated through several means. As regional collaborations develop spatial strategies, planning effectiveness – or performance – can be regarded part of the means to evaluate the overall effectiveness – or strategic capacity – of regional collaborations.

Nevertheless, 'merely' evaluating the performance of the process and results can say a lot about the effectiveness of the collaboration. The reason for this is that within a regional collaboration, and responsibilities, tasks resources are not predefined. As discussed in Paragraph 4.1, there is a gap between policy making and implementation, making that implementation is not straightforward. The collaboration will have to be effective in creating commitment to the produced strategies. Agreements will have to be carried by the individual participants. Thus, the performance of the process and results can give a meaningful insight in the effectiveness of the collaboration. The relation is showed in Figure 2.
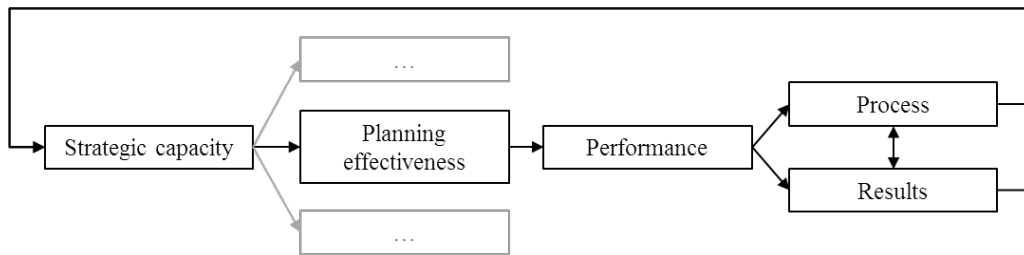

Figure 2 The concepts of effectiveness, performance and strategic capacity related

4.4 Operationalizing strategic capacity evaluation

Now that the relation between the two concepts is shown, the relation has to be operationalized in order to function in a comprehensive evaluation framework. With the help of the work of other researchers in the field of collaborative spatial planning evaluation, the relation is operationalized. Furthermore, the adaption of the definitions solves the remaining identified deficiencies.

Firstly, it has been shown that there are some differences between the evaluation subject of this paper and the subjects of Haran (2010). The strategic capacity definition of Haran has been slightly adapted to better reflect the intention of the regional collaboration and the developed AASR, namely to steer decision making in the MIRT by aligning and coordinating the ambitions and the efforts of the region and the national government for the long term. The policy statements in the AASR do not require direct implementation but rather continuous consideration of how paths of action fit into the strategies set forth in the AASR. Furthermore, it has been discussed that a spatial strategy is not the only result of the process. For the purposes of this research, strategic capacity is understood as:

the ability to [involve a wide number of stakeholders] [while producing well-defined strategies with high selectivity and internal coherency] and [effectively acting upon the ambitions set forth in the strategies while maintaining the support and commitment of collaborating members].

The trichotomy in this definition has resulted in three components of strategic capacity. These components are reception, consolidation and realization (Haran, 2010). These definitions are also slightly adapted in order to align them with the authors' definition of strategic capacity. Please refer to table 2.

Table 2 Definition of strategic capacity split into three components.

Reception	continuous incorporation of (new) knowledge by a wider group of stakeholders through self organization and facilitation.
Consolidation	collectively filtering and selecting from different ideas, thoughts and action and prioritizing between potential paths of action.
Realization	development of and commitment to future collaboration for the purpose of implementation of the produced strategy.

With the help of the concept of Collaborative Planning Evaluation (CPE) of Innes and Booher (1999) and the follow-up of CPE by Mandarano (2008), the relation between strategic capacity as defined by the author and performance can be operationalized. CPE combines the collaborative character of strategic capacity with the evaluation of a spatial strategy through its use of components. CSP divides the evaluation into the components process, output and outcome (Mandarano, 2008).

Process as understood by Innes and Booher (1999) and Mandarano (2008) includes engaging a wide group of participants with relevant and different interests through common incentives, incorporating (new) knowledge while following good process design. These elements fall under the definition of reception: *continuous incorporation of (new) knowledge by a wider group of stakeholders through self organization and facilitation.*

Output and outcome are the two types of results of the collaboration process (Mandarano, 2008). The line of reasoning behind the distinction between output and outcome is that the results of a collaborative process are very different in nature. There are physical results in the form of a plan or strategy and there are more abstract results in the form of social effects.

Performance divides the results into two types of effectiveness. The first type is the relevance of results in subsequent decision situations. Innes and Booher (1999) and Mandarano (2008) justly include high quality and innovation as important considerations for the output of regional collaborations. High quality and innovative output reflect the ability to collectively select and prioritize ideas with the highest relevance (Mastop & Faludi, 1997). For high quality and innovative output, the participants of the regional collaboration should jointly filter and select appropriate paths of action based on their collective goals and ambitions as well as sound knowledge (Margerum, 2002). Consolidation is defined as *collectively filtering and selecting from different ideas, thoughts and action and prioritizing between potential paths of action*, showing that consolidation can indeed be found in the output of collaborative processes.

The second type of effectiveness in performance theory is the acceptance of a spatial strategy as part of the decision making situation (Mastop and Faludi, 1997). In the case of spatial strategies like the AASR, acceptance should be reflected by the potential of subsequent decisions being in broad agreement with the spatial strategy. Due to the abstract nature of the AASR, no concrete agreements for realization based purely on what is in the AASR can be made. Therefore, only the potential for realization through social outcomes like commitment and social capital among the involved parties is considered (Innes & Booher, 1999; Mandarano, 2008). The social effects as meant by outcome show the acceptance or commitment of the involved parties to continue participating in the collaborative process. The component realization, *development of and commitment to future collaboration for the purpose of implementation of the produced strategy*, reflects this ambition level with regard to implementation. The result of the operationalization effort is table 3.

Table 3 Operationalization of the link between strategic capacity and performance through CPE

	Components		
Strategic capacity	Reception	Consolidation	Realization
Operationalization through CPE	Process	Output	Outcome
Performance	Process	Relevance of results	Acceptance of results

5   Introducing the enriched evaluation framework

In this section the enriched framework based on the work of Haran (2010) for the evaluation of a regional collaboration as reflected by the performance of its results is presented. The indicators are mainly qualitative. The framework provides a method to assess the strategic capacity of the AASR collaboration at the moment of execution of the research. This research is therefore a snapshot of the ongoing process of working together, formulating strategies and building social capital and commitment within the regional collaboration.

Table 4 Operationalization of strategic capacity

	Components	Sources	Indicators
Reception - how was the process that led to the output organized?			
Process	Process design	(Briassoulis, 2004) (Mastop & Faludi, 1997) (Mandarano, 2008) (Margerum, 2002) (De Bruijn et al., 2010)	• Self-organization; participants decide rules, groups and topics • Support and facilitation of the process • Consistent procedures for decision making
	Participation and involvement	(Briassoulis, 2004) (Haran, 2010) (Healey, 1998) (Mastop & Faludi, 1997) (Mandarano, 2008) (Margerum, 2002) (De Bruijn et al., 2010)	• Engagement of stakeholders through common goals/objectives/issues • Intensity of involvement
	Incorporation of knowledge	(Briassoulis, 2004) (Haran, 2010) (Healey, 1998) (Mastop & Faludi, 1997) (Margerum, 2002) (De Bruijn et al., 2010)	• Shared research sources and consistent information bases • Common assessment, integration and evaluation tools • Encourages creative thinking and challenges beliefs
	Diversity and multiplicity	(Briassoulis, 2004) (Haran, 2010) (Mastop & Faludi, 1997) (Healey, 1998) (Mandarano, 2008) (Margerum, 2002) (De Bruijn et al., 2010)	• Representatives of all relevant and different interests across territories and policy fields (spatial planning, housing, transport, economy) • Interaction between private, public and non-gov. parties

Consolidation – to what extend do the outputs have an effect on subsequent decision making?			
Output	Well-defined and agreed strategies	(Briassoulis, 2004) (Haran, 2010) (Mastop & Faludi, 1997) (Mandarano, 2008) (Margerum, 2002)	• Includes long term development strategies • Joining up of different policy fields and their actors • Joining up of policy fields between territories • Agreement shows innovation and creativity

Realization – does the AASR have the potential to be in broad agreement with subsequent policy documents?			
Outcome	Commitment	(Briassoulis, 2004) (Haran, 2010) (Innes & Booher, 1999) (Mandarano, 2008)	• Collective action based on agreements in the spatial strategy • Impact in organizations
	Social capital	(Briassoulis, 2004) (Mastop & Faludi, 1997) (Mandarano, 2008)	• Informal interaction between formal actors • Trust among actors

The indicators remain quite broad. It should be noted that this framework thus does not provide a list of characteristics to be ticked off, but rather a collection of broadly interpretable aspects of regional collaborations that can cover a wide range of findings. It should be noted that it is not necessary that the indicators reflect what has happened during or after the process for the collaboration to be considered effective (Mandarano, 2008). As always with frameworks, it is the responsibility of the researcher to interpret the findings in a logical manner. While the framework thus provides a structured guide for evaluation, researchers should come to a meaningful conclusion on their own merit.

5.1   Discussion of the framework

The components and indicators from Table 4 have been carefully selected and assembled, based on empirical findings and the work of other spatial planning evaluation theorists. The reasoning behind the selection of the components and indicators is elaborated upon in this section.

De Bruijn, Ten Heuvelhof and In 't Veld (2010) provide important points of consideration when making process arrangements (see Figure 3). These process arrangements are essential for making a collaboration effective and will, among other notions, be used to substantiate the selection of

Figure 3 Process characteristics of De Bruijn et al (2010)

indicators.

5.1.1 Process design

The indicators *self-organization, support and facilitation* and *consistent procedures for decision making* are included as part of the process design component because they reflect the qualities of openness, progress and protection of core values of De Bruijn et al. (2010). When there is room for self-organization, parties can decide their own joint process rules, topics and work forms. This makes the process open and democratic, which is important for voluntary collaborations.

De Bruijn et al. (2010) have discussed the importance of progress in a process. If there is no progress, participants feel their efforts are not leading to results and decide to quit it altogether. (Independent) process support and facilitation can help the process further through adequate preparation of meetings and use of techniques to involve parties, even in times of conflict.

The inclusion of consistent procedure for decision making is motivated by the process considerations openness and protection of core values by De Bruijn et al. (2010). Consistent procedures lead to openness and protection of core values as all participants understand the procedure and know what criteria each decision has to pass to be accepted.

5.1.2 Diversity and multiplicity

De Bruijn et al. (2010) considerations of openness, substance and progress make that the indicator *interaction between private, public and non-profit parties* is appropriate. The interaction between different types of parties ensures that a variety of interests and concerns can be heard (Briassoulis, 2004).

Openness to different interests lead to substance and progress as parties will feel less need to delay. The process consideration substance is partly taken care of if *representatives from different territories, policy sectors* are included. It ensures that the majority of interests and requirements are covered. Varied interests and territories forces participants to think differently and search for common goals and ambitions (De Bruijn et al., 2010; Briassoulis, 2004; Healey, 1998; Innes & Booher, 1999).

5.1.3 Participation and involvement

The inclusion of the indicator *engagement of stakeholders through common goals and objectives* is suitable to find out whether the parties have a common incentive to participate. A common incentive, like a sense of urgency is a necessary to drive the process. When there is no drive or commitment, the process will lack progress or participants (Mandarano, 2008; Margerum, 2002; Briassoulis, 2004; De Bruijn et al., 2010).

The *intensity or level of involvement* is a relevant indicator to determine the level of commitment of parties to the process and its results (Healey, 1998; Innes & Booher, 1999; Mandarano, 2008). If a party is committed to the process, it delegates a representative who has commitment power, meaning they can work relatively independent from their superiors. The commitment power of these representatives influences the progress of the process (De Bruijn et al., 2010).

5.1.4 Incorporation of knowledge

The indicator *shared resources and consistent information bases* is based on the notion of Briassoulis (2004) and Margerum (2002) that common information and negotiated knowledge can help parties to achieve consensus, thereby enhancing progress (De Bruijn et al., 2010).

The data considered with the indicator *common assessment, integration and evaluation tools* also represents the process considerations progress and substance by the Bruijn et al. (2010). Common

tools can help parties to build negotiated knowledge and tools for equal understanding of knowledge and propositions, limiting the number of conflicts (Briassoulis, 2004; Margerum, 2002).

Creative thinking and challenging of beliefs form a twofold indicator that reflects the substance of the process. New insights and approaches make the formulation of a new document relevant and logical. If not, parties are difficult to engage in the process (De Bruijn et al., 2010; Innes & Booher, 1999; Healey, 1998).

5.1.5 Well-defined and integrated strategies

The indicator *innovation and creativity* is included on the basis that good collaboration and consideration of different interests is shown by the innovation and creativity of the content. It suggests that considerations have been made and prioritized (Innes & Booher, 1999; Mandarano, 2008). Furthermore, innovation and creativity in the document reveal the effort participants have made with regard to substance (De Bruijn et al., 2010).

The *inclusion of long term strategies* is an important indicator to consider. If long term strategies are the main focus of a spatial strategy, it suggests that parties are willing to commit in the long term to what they have agreed. Furthermore, it shows that there has been a consideration of the future relevance and coherence of the actions that have to be taken (Margerum, 2002; Briassoulis, 2004).

The third and fourth indicator are included, because *the integration of policy sectors, parties and territories* shows that a variety of considerations have been made and prioritized (Healey, 1998; Margerum, 2002; Briassoulis, 2004). The integration of territories, sectors and parties shows an understanding of where opportunities and threats are located and how they can be used to strengthen the region in its entirety.

5.1.6 Commitment

Collective action based on agreements in the spatial strategy shows commitment of effort and resources to bring the ambitions of the AASR about (Haran, 2010; Briassoulis, 2004; Innes & Booher, 1999; Mandarano, 2008). It is a vital indicator that reflects the potential for realization of the ambitions.

The second indicator reflecting *commitment* is the *impact in organizations of government*. However obvious it may be, the AASR should be known within the governments and organizations for it to be used and realized (Mastop & Faludi, 1997).

5.1.7 Social capital

The first indicator of the component *social capital* is included for two reasons. Firstly, informal relations reflect the stance of a participant towards the collaboration itself. Secondly, personal informal contact generates expectations about each other (Innes & Booher, 1999; Mandarano, 2008; Briassoulis, 2004).

Trust is necessary to engage in a process with conviction and represent each other's interests successfully (Innes & Booher, 1999; De Bruijn et al., 2010; Process Management, 2010; Mandarano, 2008). *Trust among involved parties* can be divided into two aspects, namely trust in each other on the one side and trust in the produced spatial strategy on the other side.

6   Case study: strategic capacity in the southern Randstad

A case study has been conducted in which the enriched framework has been used. The case is the regional collaboration between the national government and the Zuidvleugel partners in the southern

Randstad. This (test) case is briefly discussed, as it provides experiences about the use of the framework, forming the base of the evaluation of the framework itself. This evaluation is presented in section 6.2.

6.1   The regional collaboration in the southern Randstad and the Adaptive Agenda

The regional collaboration between the Zuidvleugel partners and the national government seeks to align their ambitions, strategies and resources for the purpose of coordinating regional development. The Zuidvleugel partners stem from the Public Partnership Zuidvleugel, which is an informal regional collaboration which seeks to develop the southern Randstad spatial-economically. Globally, the southern Randstad stretches from Leiden to Dordrecht, including a very diverse selection of economic sectors and spatial characteristics.

The collaboration stretches across all tiers of government, even including the water boards. It aims to formulate policy statements at a strategic level, rather than offering concrete paths of action. Moreover, the collaboration is structured by policy of the Ministry of Infrastructure & Environment, making it formal in that sense. At the same time it is informal in the sense that it cannot make decisions by itself or implement its own decisions. The regional collaboration is thus dependent on the social and political commitment of the participants for the implementation of the results of the process. Strategic capacity is thus a relevant concept for this type of collaboration.

For the purpose of strengthening the spatial-economic situation in the southern Randstad, several territorial agendas have been developed over the last years together with the national government (Zonneveld & Spaans 2014). The latest, the Adaptive Agenda Southern Randstad 2040 (AASR), is the object of this evaluation. In the AASR, the common ambitions and complementing strategies for the spatial-economic situation for the southern Randstad by 2040 are sketched.

The development of the AASR took place within the context of a national government investment programme called MIRT. The national government used the MIRT to give the Zuidvleugel partners an incentive to collaborate and formulate spatial strategies. Within the MIRT framework, parties could organize the process themselves, determining the level of involvement, how information was treated and how choices were made. Within the MIRT, decisions are made for investments in regional projects or the commissioning of research – MIRT explorations - so robust MIRT decisions can be made in the future.

While the content of the AASR is not new (most can be found in earlier Agendas), the approach that is taken is. The AASR advocates the adaptive approach, meaning that 1) governments and policy statements should be flexible enough to cope with all possible scenarios in the future and still be relevant and 2) governments should work with and facilitate external parties and their initiatives, allowing for adequate reactions to opportunities from the market.

6.2   Findings

A picture of the strategic capacity has emerged that is both positive and critical. The process has had a diverse selection of governments participating continuously and was appropriately and enthusiastically managed by the process managers, but the essence of the process – its position in the MIRT, its objectives and form – have not had the attention it required. Moreover, the lack of external parties in the process lowers the strategic capacity of the collaboration, as is experienced during the initiation phase of the MIRT explorations.

The result is a spatial strategy that is both strategic and concrete; and strong social outcomes. Some initiatives have emerged which reflect the ambitions in the AASR, showing the commitment of parties to their common ambitions. Participants are found to value the AASR, trust each other and appreciate the developed adaptive approach, but both output and outcome require nourishment and follow-through to keep them at the high appreciation levels they are now. Especially the adaptive approach

will require continuous effort to settle in the regular practices of governments at all levels and to connect with market parties and knowledge institutes. The AASR has proven to be an exemplary strategic outcome of close collaboration between regional parties (the Zuidvleugel partners) and the national government (Harteveld, 2014). Other regions refer to the AASR when trying to decide their approach to national /subnational collaborative spatial planning.

The strategic capacity of the regional collaboration between national government and Zuidvleugel partners is thus ambiguous. The regional collaboration before the finalization of the AASR seems to have had more strategic capacity than it has after the finalization of the AASR. The efforts during the development process have resulted in several initiatives such as the MIRT explorations and collaborations on issues, albeit these initiatives have not yet resulted in concrete interventions, physical or policy-wise, in the spatial-economic situation of the southern Randstad. The groundwork for interventions has been laid in the form of new research and regional sub-collaborations, showing that the regional collaboration indeed has strategic capacity by bringing this about. However, there are several elements that have emerged after the finalization of the AASR, such as the adaptive approach, which limit the strategic capacity at this moment. It seems that due to the indistinctness – or more specifically, the lack of a clear goal and purpose – the effort and commitment to the current AASR process is lowering. Focus and effort is shifting to the MIRT explorations and the regional (sub-)collaborations on specific issues.

7 Evaluation of the use of the evaluation framework

For the purposes of this thesis research, the conceptual framework of Haran (2010) has been enriched into a full scoped evaluation framework for the strategic capacity of a regional collaboration as reflected by the performance of one of its products. It has been developed for and tested on the case of the regional collaboration between national government and Zuidvleugel partners.

The resulting overview of process, output and outcomes forms the basis to answer the question of strategic capacity, and has shown to be useful. While strategic capacity is also dependent on other issues – like the dynamic context in which regional collaborations operate, or its legitimacy and presumably more – the performance of the process and results do give a strong indication of the level at which a regional collaboration is able to cooperate to achieve joint policy goals by producing and implementing effective spatial strategies and thus of the strategic capacity. A process evaluation illustrates the manner in which the regional collaboration cooperated, which results in social outcomes that should ideally benefit the realization of the ambitions in the output of the process; the spatial strategy. Indeed, the purpose of having strategic capacity is to effectively intervene in the current spatial-economic situation to realize one's ambitions. Thus, the evaluation framework provides the building blocks needed to answer the question of strategic capacity. This answer is relevant even though the aforementioned other issues are not actively studied.

8 Concluding remarks & recommendations for further research

Since collaborative spatial planning initiatives are continuously evolving in the face of the institutional void, a framework has been developed based on existing frameworks. This framework is used to evaluate the strategic capacity, or the ability of a group of actors to cooperate to achieve joint policy goals by producing and implementing effective spatial strategies.

The crucial adaption to the framework is the link between the strategic capacity of the collaboration and the performance of its product. This allows for stricter delineation of the evaluation and for an evaluation of the strategic capacity development of a regional collaboration over time based on the performance of two or more spatial strategies.

8.1 Recommendations for further research

The expanded evaluation framework applied on the regional collaboration in the southern Randstad. However, no comparison has been possible to other regional collaborations. It is therefore recommended that additional research is done on the strategic capacity of other regional collaborations in order to develop a frame of reference.

The evaluation framework for strategic capacity has been found to be lacking with regard to legitimacy and the context the regional collaboration under investigation operates in. This means that the collaboration in itself can be found to have high strategic capacity, but limited accountability and responsibility; and due to external developments in the context, the strategic capacity six months from now could be dramatically different. The developments of the Metropolitan region Rotterdam The Hague parallel to the Public Partnership Zuidvleugel (in which the Zuidvleugel partners come together) can and will have an impact on the operations of the PPZ and the Zuidvleugel partners.

For this reason, an adaption or addition to the evaluation is necessary. For example, the evaluation framework could be expanded to include and extra elements besides the original three that refer to the dynamics in the context of the regional collaboration and legitimacy. These elements could include indicators like the level of feedback received from administrators with regard to the practices and the commitment of administrators to different collaborations in the southern Randstad. Another direction for involving the context could be a more elaborate external actor analysis of the similar CSP initiatives in the wider region, including their stance towards the different collaborations.

8.2   Final remarks

This having been said, the evaluation framework has considerable potential for meaningful evaluation of regional collaborations. Even though the context of collaborative spatial planning is continuously evolving, regional collaboration which formulated the AASR has shown that strategic capacity evaluation of the collaboration itself can provide interesting insights in its performance. Regional collaborations are likely to stay and the framework allows for critical analysis and can help identify best practices. The question of how collaborative spatial planning should be practiced in the future depends largely on the effort participants and process managers will put into nourishing and improving current processes. Paired with the developments outside the collaboration, only the future will tell how collaborative spatial planning practice will evolve. The findings of strategic capacity evaluation can provide guidance towards the best practices.

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