

SOFT SPACES AND GOVERNANCE: THE TRANSFORMATION OF PLANNING

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Abstract

Soft space governance arrangements are emerging all over Europe and at all geographical scales. Soft space approaches complement, but do not come in place of statutory planning. They are a reaction on and reflection of the changing context in which planning aims to be effective and as such indicate a reworking of the boundaries of the planning profession and the transformation of planning practice. As of yet little is known about soft space governance. This paper presents examples of soft space governance, develops a conceptual model to assess planning in its context and presents a first attempt to developing a research agenda in order to critically assess soft space planning.

1. Introduction

There is increasing evidence showing that planning in Europe is transforming in order to deal with changing spatial and institutional contexts. Traditional comprehensive integrated planning is left behind and substituted by a variety of approaches aiming at effective solutions to meet today's challenges. 'Getting things done' (see: Allmendinger & Haughton 2009) is becoming an important and ever more powerful rationale to legitimize all kinds of new and experimental approaches. Common are a new treatment of space and place (Davoudi & Strange 2009), the focus on integrated or joint-up solutions, the focus on governance and the role of private actors and stakeholders in developing and delivering policies and the emphasis on accountability. Some issues, however, remain, such as the bridging the divide between vision and projects,

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adapting to and complying with sectoral logic laid down in numerous regulations and (EU) directives as well as, inevitably and perhaps even more now, the issue of participation and legitimacy. This paper reviews the most prominent of these issues: the emergence of soft space governance arrangements.

Excluding introduction and conclusion this paper comes in five parts. The following section will introduce the concept of soft space and place it in a broader societal context. It will be argued in a next section (section 3) that soft space governance arrangements emerge increasingly throughout Europe and at various geographical scales. Section 4 discusses the case of the Randstad Holland in which the Randstad 2040 structure vision forms a prime example of soft space governance. After having presented examples, section 5 develops a conceptual model of planning in its context in order to better understand how and where soft space governance complements statutory planning. The paper rounds off with presenting a research agenda (section 6) to further analyse the characteristics and the positive and negative side of soft space governance.

2. Soft Space as a reaction on changing government and complex geographies

Recent work by Allmendinger and Haughton highlights most clearly how public authorities seek new ways to treat space and place. Based on a number of case studies in the UK Allmendinger and Haughton see a new type of planning emerge that is created around what they call ‘soft spaces’ and ‘fuzzy boundaries’ (Allmendinger and Haughton 2009; Haughton et al. 2010). Such spaces and boundaries are not stable in time nor in space, but form for a certain period of time the focus of policy delivery with regard to, for example, housing, infrastructure, economic development, nature, environment or indeed territorial cohesion.

Four conclusions are drawn with regard to soft spaces:

1. “Soft spaces represent a deliberate attempt to insert new opportunities for creative thinking, particularly in areas where public engagement and cross-sectoral consultation has seen entrenched oppositional forces either slowing down or freezing out most forms of new development.
 2. The ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ spaces of governance are mutually constitutive, such that one cannot work without the other. The aim is not to replace ‘hard’ institutional spaces with ‘softer’ ones, rather to create complementary and potentially competing opportunities for development activities to focus around, whether at some kind of ‘sub’ regional or ‘sub’ local government scale.
 3. The soft spaces of governance are becoming more numerous and more important as part of the institutional landscape of spatial planning and area regeneration.
 4. Soft spaces often seem to be defined in ways that are deliberately fluid and fuzzy in a sense that they can be amended and shaped easily to reflect different interests and challenges.” (Haughton et al. 2010: 52).
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Soft space approaches must be understood in the context of the general trend of the changing nation state and the decline of government control. Ever since the Westphalian state model became the norm, ‘hard’ spaces marked by national, provincial and local borders have crucially determined our lives, identities and geographical reach. However, administrative borders, at whatever level, sit uneasily with spatial structures, processes and the way in which we use our land. Globalisation and the rise of network societies make this problem appear particularly acute. The ‘modern’ nation-state has come under pressure and with it our models of governance. Hajer talks in this respect about “the implosion of the territorial order of modern government, which requires us fundamentally to rethink the basis of effective political intervention, and hence of policy making.” (Hajer 2003: 183)

Post-war governance was for a variety of reasons “supported by the fact that political institutions, cultural adherences and societal processes converged on the level of the nation-state”. However, as Hajer (2003: 183) continues, “now that this *territorial synchrony* is broken, the classical modernist institutions lose the implicit support and assisting power of aligning socio-economic and cultural adherences.” If this is true for governance in general, then it is certainly true for territorial governance systems, which, being about the optimal allocation of the resource space to various ‘functions’, is classically thus prefaced upon the existence of a bounded space under the jurisdiction of an authority.

Are we talking about the demise of the nation-state and its multi-tiered system of regional and local jurisdictions? In common with various other commentators (e.g. Swyngedouw 2005, Brenner 1999, Hajer 2003), we suggest not. Policy interventions are still dependent on the institutions of the nation-state. This is reflected in the second conclusion above, too, concerning ‘hard’ (administrative) and ‘soft’ space governance mutually relying on each other.

However, both the effectiveness and the legitimacy of nation-state institutions are seriously constrained. The concept of a nation-state, even if it is multi-tiered, as a power to intervene in social processes is increasingly at odds with today’s geographies and socio-economic processes. Social processes can no longer be characterised or easily demarcated in geographical terms, let alone by borders. Many processes find their origin in local or global trends, as well as everything in between, and can hardly be dealt with at one particular geographical scale. As a result of multiple overlapping and conflicting processes taking place at various geographical scales, our societies have become fluid or splintered (Graham & Marvin 2001) and territories have become fragmented (Allmendinger & Haughton 2007). Soft space or place based approaches, which aim to address and relate, within a loosely defined area, multiple ambitions and challenges at the same time, can be regarded an attempt to regain control over territories.

3. Examples of soft space planning

Soft space planning can already be found all over Europe. In France a new practice of *planification stratégique* has emerged involving stakeholders to jointly formulate problems and strategies to solve them, irrespective of jurisdictions (Geppert 2008). The UK has introduced new instruments such as Regional Spatial Strategies, Regional Economic Strategies, housing, transport and even more strategies that partly overlap, in order to deal with current day complex regional challenges that, interestingly, are often and increasingly solved through interventions at scales other than those of the statutory planning system (Allmendinger & Haughton 2009). Germany has seen the establishing of *großräumige Verantwortungsgemeinschaften* (also referred to as *überregionale Partnerschaften*) in order to foster balanced partnerships including private actors to address more effectively the development of *Metropolregionen* and their rural hinterland (Kawka 2009). In the Netherlands the new Spatial Planning Act does away with formal authorization powers between administrative levels and introduces some new flexible instruments, like structure visions and general spatial planning principles, in order to break through the governance thickness. And so we can go on.

More concrete examples of soft space planning endeavours can be found at various geographical levels. At the highest geographical level, at least for the moment, the eye catching EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea can be found. Eye catching and much discussed because this type of strategy developed by the European Commission services at the request of the Baltic Sea Council may form the start, under the label of territorial cohesion, of a whole new era in EU policy delivery. Already, the Commission is working on a Danube Strategy and its work programme for 2010 mentions possible strategies for the Alpine Area, the Mediterranean and the North Sea amongst others. Other stakeholders, such as Spain, asked for developing an Atlantic Arc Strategy. Interesting about the strategies is the bottom-up request and the fact that the Commission, much against its usual image, is able to deliver cross-sectoral policy statements focusing on a specific, though soft, area. Implementation is left to the respective member states and regions and thus also relies on 'hard' space institutions. Soft space planning intrinsically depends on multi-level governance and meta-governance (the governance of governance) arrangements.

One level down a large number of cross border strategies and cooperation initiatives can be found, which, although often with long historical backgrounds, also can be regarded soft space planning attempts. Examples are well known initiatives such as Saar-lor-lux, the Trinationnal Eurodistrict Basel, Oresund cooperation, Vienna-Bratislava-Gyor (Tatzberger 2008), the Alpine-Adriatic attempts to cooperate (Haselsberger & Benneworth forthcoming, Fabbro & Haselsberger 2009), cooperation between the Netherlands and Flanders around the Scheldt estuary (De Vries 2008) and so on. Whilst these examples differ in terms of history, maturity, effectiveness, stakeholders and institutional context they all form expressions of a perceived need to jump across national borders in order to address spatial issues that do not

limit themselves to hard spaces. Depending on functional relations addressed the emerging soft space governance forms may, over time, vary in terms of geographical reach, scope as well as stakeholder composition. Although many soft space arrangements are public sector led, there is increasing evidence of private stakeholder involvement and initiative, such as is the case in Basel.

Most examples can be found within member states where new governance arrangements at regional level, involving local and regional authorities are becoming standard. Many of these arrangements are the result of national meta-governance policy frameworks, such as subsidy schemes, guidelines and conditional policy delivery, aiming at stimulating bottom-up initiatives. Examples are the earlier mentioned *Projets du territoire* in France and *überregionale partnerschaften* in Germany, whereas for example in Italy *Sistemi Macroregionali Funzionali* are considered and Interdependent Territorial Systems proposed (Janin Rivolin 2010). So, referring to the quote of Hajer (2003) above on the Westphalian model, it is actually at member state level itself that it is recognized that traditional systems are not longer able to deliver and that complementary systems are necessary. As is aptly illustrated by Haughton et al. (2010) for the cases of Wales, Leeds and, amongst others, the Thames Gateway (see also: Allmendinger & Haughton 2009) these new systems break away from traditional government and aim to establish new arrangements including public and private stakeholders that allow for creative and innovative solutions and effective delivery.

Soft space governance, however, also can be, and increasingly is, the result of private stakeholder activity. Trinational Eurodistrict Basel is an example. But also Bonn forms an interesting example. On the eve of the German unification and the relocating of the capital to Berlin it were a few large (privatized) companies that fuelled spatial strategy development (Wiechmann 2008). More recent the co-operation in Rhine-Neckar Metropolitan Region catches the attention. Here some twenty large companies such as John Deere, BASF, Mercedes Benz, SAP, Roche, ABB and so forth, have formed a Stakeholder Association (GmbH) which includes public partners too and established an office. It developed a regional strategy in order to deliberately and collaborately steer the region's future development (Sinz 2010).

4. The Randstad 2040 Case

A case forming an archetype of soft space governance arrangement is the Randstad Holland. Identified already back in the 1960s by Peter Hall as a 'world city' and having formed the focal point of national planning for over half a century, it has only been in 2008 that the first spatial strategy saw the light that was exclusively devoted to the Randstad: i.e. the Randstad 2040 structure vision (MHSPE 2008). Similar to the Rhine-Ruhr area and other polycentric regions, the Randstad is renown for its complex governance structure (Lambrechts & Zonneveld 2004, Salet 2006, Gualini 2006, Lambrechts et al. 2008, Lambrechts 2009). Ever since it became the focus of attention, back in 1957, there never has been a formal Randstad Authority.

Coordination platforms such as Regio Randstad have been established, but also been abolished after losing the support from the four large cities and four provinces that comprise the Randstad. In fact, currently the only official representation at Randstad level is the Randstad Office in Brussels, a lobby organization. Whereas there is no Randstad authority, there is no lack of governance. In fact the Randstad suffers from governance thickness or congestion. This situation is considered unfortunate by both public and private stakeholders. Finally it was an individual planner, a professor, who established in 2000 the Deltametropolis Association. Amongst its members there are some of the largest Dutch companies such as ABN-AMRO and ING bank as well as water boards, housing corporations, real estate developers, environmental and nature protection organizations, the national rail infrastructure company but also municipalities like Amsterdam and Leiden and the provinces Zuid Holland and Utrecht. Yet, whilst this association gained much influence in the early 2000s (Lambregts & Zonneveld 2004), currently its role is one of informing, organizing debate and support.

It required a new Spatial Planning Act (turned into force in 2008), which introduced the new instrument of informal structure visions as well as a subsidiarity principle legitimizing national and provincial intervention in provincial and local practice respectively, in those cases that issues of national or provincial interest are concerned. As a result of the National Spatial Strategy of 2006 boosting a governance model that prioritises decentralized over national initiative (central initiative only in cases where it is necessary), the national government had taken a back seat for a while. However, with the new act it was clear that the national government should develop a structure vision for the Randstad, being a key area in the Netherlands.

A structure vision is a notoriously different type of policy instrument than the National Reports and National Spatial Strategy under the previous law. Whereas the latter contained a binding Key Planning Decision, the new structure visions are only binding for the government layer that develops it, in this case the national government. However, they are intended as a policy ‘light’, as a strategic document guiding, where- and whenever appropriate, future decisions in spatial planning and other policy fields. Provinces and municipalities are not bound to the structure visions of the national government. These structure visions, however, do provide the necessary legitimation for direct intervention in provincial or local territory. Be that as it may, it took about one and a half year to develop the Randstad 2040 document. Much effort has been put in consulting relevant public and private stakeholders as well as citizens.

The soft space character of the Randstad 2040 transpires in a number of ways. First, the Randstad 2040 document does not indicate formal boundaries of the Randstad. In fact, certain issues have a geographical reach well beyond what is traditionally regarded the Randstad area. In so doing the Randstad is regarded and deliberately treated as a soft space with fuzzy boundaries, allowing to also including in policy delivery relevant stakeholders from outside the Randstad. Second, in terms of treating space and spatial development

also a clear shift can be observed. Contrary to earlier national planning documents the Randstad 2040 vision does not attempt to deliver policy options from a holistic perspective. Reflecting the spatial complexity of a densely populated area like the Randstad, it merely proposes twelve ‘spatial choices’ some of which apply to the total Randstad and others only to specific parts or sectors of it. A third way expressing the soft space character concerns policy delivery. Whereas there is an obligatory implementation programme added to the document, there is also an experimental (and arguably more important) policy delivery method included, called ‘Randstad 2040 implementation partnerships’. As part of the consultation process seven of such bottom-up partnerships have been created, each of which deals with a collaborately defined issue.

The Randstad 2040 implementation partnerships form another indication of a government searching for more effective and efficient ways of policy delivery against a context of decreasing government control. The seven partnerships that have been established concern:

- Centre development
- The Hague: International City of Justice, Peace and Safety
- Urban transformation and intensification
- Sea ports (Rotterdam and Amsterdam)
- Enforcing economic structure Rotterdam and The Hague
- Climate resilient cities
- Top quality green areas in and around cities

Each partnership operates under the leadership of a key stakeholder, varying from the mayor of The Hague and Rotterdam, to the port authority of Rotterdam (an independent organization), to private parties such as real estate development companies (in the cases of the urban transformation and the centre development partnerships). All partnerships report directly to the minister of spatial planning and they all handed in their policy delivery proposals by early 2010. It is now to the government to see whether funds can be allocated to the several proposals. But also if this will not happen, the partnership model has already created an unprecedented progress in some fields. For example, the notorious animosity between the Rotterdam and Amsterdam Sea ports as well as between the cities of The Hague and Rotterdam somehow has been overcome (at least first steps have been made) by organizing bottom-up incentives. Whereas traditionally these stakeholders were in fierce competition for central government funds, now they develop joint policy programmes (or at least in name that is, rumour has it that some alliances pragmatically develop seemingly joint policy, but in which the revenues are carefully divided over the stakeholders). Whatever the outcome will be, Randstad 2040 clearly marks a shift in policy development and delivery, albeit a shift that obviously raises questions regarding issues of legitimacy, multi-level governance and effectiveness.

In order to address questions regarding legitimacy, multi-level governance and policy effectiveness the remainder of this paper will develop first a conceptual model of planning and second will make a first

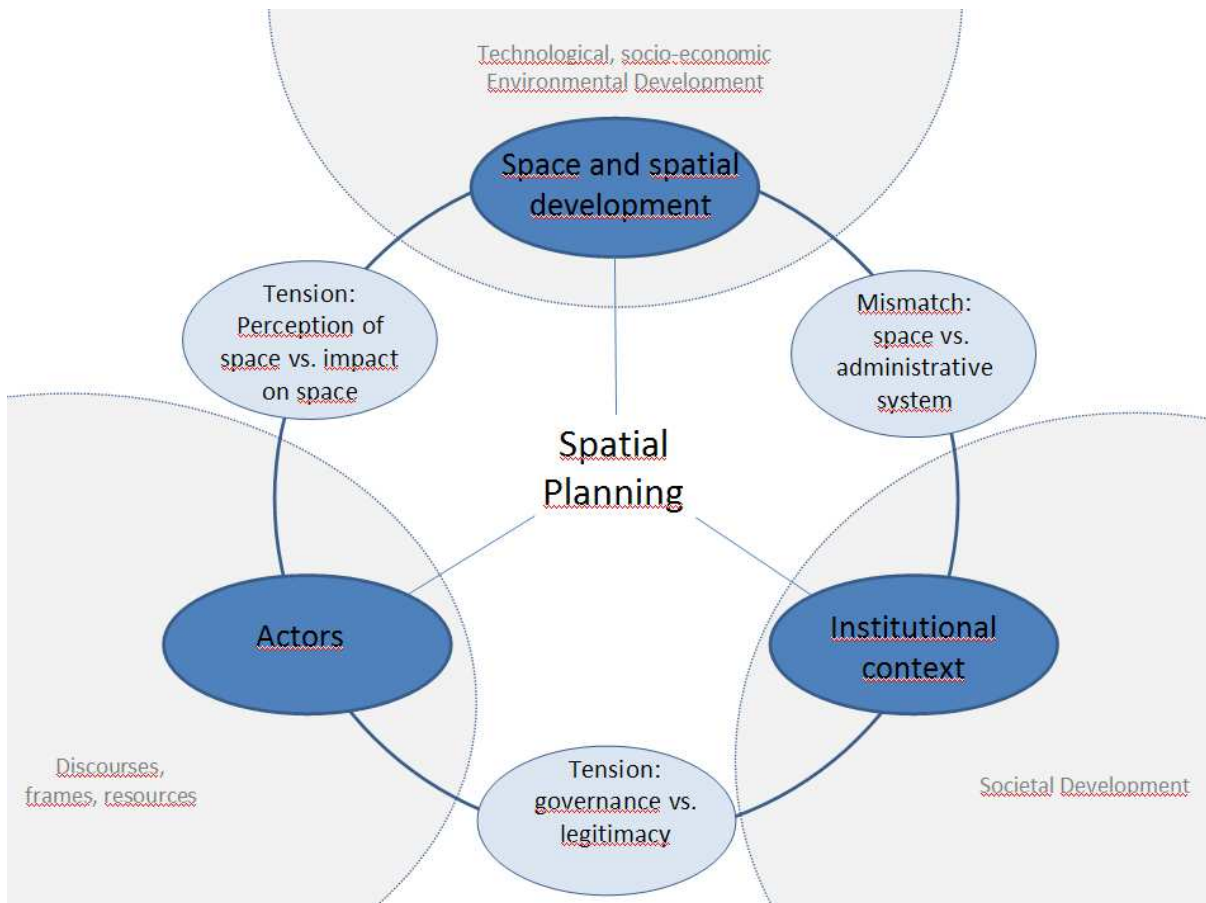
attempt to identify some theoretical angles from which the phenomenon of soft space governance can be analysed and understood.

5. Conceptualising planning and its context

As has become clear from the above, in the emerging forms of soft space multi-level governance planning is just one of the many interests. Reflecting the general trend of the changing role of public government, the spatial development of urban regions, more than ever, is determined outside the offices of public administration. What can be observed are new forms of entrepreneurial spatial planning (Friedmann 1993) in which the government is not necessarily the initiator or leading actor, but rather takes a merely coordinative and stimulating role to guide the spatial development challenges which emerge out of a vast array of public and private initiatives. This leads Allmendinger and Tewdwr-Jones (2006) to conclude that in the UK (but perhaps also elsewhere in Europe) spatial planning is a contributor to and a reflection of a more fundamental reform of territorial management that aims to improve the integration of different forms of spatial development activity. This includes new forms of horizontal co-operation, a widening of scope and scale, a moving away from hierarchical systems and, in fact, a reworking of the boundaries of the planning profession as such (Allmendinger & Haughton 2009). In order to understand what this new planning may look like it should first be made clear in what context planning takes place. This context will be explored by means of a conceptual model, which is what the remainder of this section is about.

In a previous paper (Waterhout et al. 2009) we presented, albeit in other terms, two contextual components of planning: space and institutional context. In this paper a third element will be added to the model: actors (and stakeholders). Actors, be they private or public, take decisions that impact upon space and spatial development. Together space, institutional context and actors form the main components of the conceptual model that will be developed here (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Spatial planning, components, influences and tensions



Each of the three components (space, institutional context and actors) themselves is influenced by planning as well as by other forces. They also mutually influence each other, which leads to specific tensions. The following will outline each contextual component, the forces changing them, their mutual relations and how planning is conditioned by them.

Space and planning

Space and, more precisely, the use of space is the object of spatial planning. Planning has a dual relationship to space: it actively influences land use but it also reacts to spatial developments, such as congestion or environmental deterioration, for which it then seeks solutions that in turn alter the course of spatial development. Spatial development, however, is influenced not only by spatial planning but even more so by technological, socio-economic, demographic and environmental developments. Examples are innovations in telecommunication, internet, high-speed trains, cheap airlines, better cars, higher salaries and living

standards, climate change, energy crisis, polluted air and rivers. The effect on space is that we travel more and further, that we want to live in bigger houses, spend more time in the countryside that itself is becoming under pressure and fragmentises, that we require higher spatial quality and so forth.

Institutional context

Institutional context basically refers to administrative systems, organisations, formal and informal decision making procedures, norms and values, and implementation and monitoring schemes. Like other policies planning is couched in this institutional context, in which it has been shaped and which logic it reflects. There will always be some friction between the policy and the context. For example, the policy has not been changed while the system did, or because the policy has some unexpected effects, for example on other policies, which therefore need to be adapted and therewith also change the system. Also issues like limited personnel or simply system errors may lead to tensions.

External forces, too, make that planning and the institutional context or setting do not always synchronise. The main force is 'societal development', which results in the transformation of social structures in a manner which improves the capacity of the society to fulfil its aspirations. In terms of governance this translates into a system of decision making and implementation. As indicated, our societies increasingly fragmentise with new groups of stakeholders emerging and becoming recognised. The challenge for governance systems is to adapt and to include as much as possible fragments of society in order to sustain the legitimacy of policies. Likewise, processes of globalisation and Europeanisation on the one hand and of individualisation of society on the other lead to new perceptions about the role of government and about the state as such. The increasing amount of meta-governance schemes, which deal with the governance of governance, forms one indication of the changing role of the central state (Jessop 2004; Haughton 2009). Another indication is the shifting balance between government and private actors in policy development and implementation.

Probably the most significant footprint, however, of institutional context on planning concerns the system of jurisdictions. Planning competencies are distributed over jurisdictions and spatial planning has, in effect, become limited to specified administrative territories, be them local, regional or national. As has been argued by many these territorial borders sit uneasily with processes in 'space'. Planning thus by definition has to operate in a context in which there is tension; in this case between the institutional system and (functional) space. It is this tension that inspired some authors to think about a kind of planning that is called non-Euclidian (Friedmann 1993), relational (Healey 2007, Davoudi & Strange 2009) or 'soft'. In these views planning is not longer based on a 'container' view of space, such as forced upon planning by current territorial based governance systems, but finds its starting point in the complex and overlapping patterns, or soft spaces and fuzzy boundaries, that characterise today's space. Rather than planning adapting to governance systems, these authors require our concept of governance and our governance systems to adapt to

space. This suggests that indeed practice is no longer to be understood in terms of territorial jurisdictions and that our governance systems already show signs of change, with soft space approaches being one of them.

Actors and planning

The third component, actors, is understood as the various interests and actions of actors and stakeholders, be they public or private, that impact upon space. Many decisions have spatial impact and it is the objective of planning to guide or influence these decisions, wherever they conflict with optimal spatial development and place making. In the public realm this means that planning aims to influence sectoral interests. In the private realm, decisions are conditioned by planning instruments such as land use plans and building permits.

Major drivers conditioning the behaviour of actors are discourses (Hajer 1995), coalitions, frames and financial streams. Basically, these concern power relations that determine which topics are on the policy agenda and which not. In this (power) game (Forester 1989, Flyvbjerg 1998, Stein and Harper 2003) planning is just one particular stakeholder that can influence the agenda, but also is influenced by it. The current attention in planning for climate change forms an example of the latter. Positioning and becoming part of major political themes and coalitions (Sabatier 1988) when policy windows appear (Kingdon 1995), is a general strategy of planning to retain its position. The central issue here is for planning to deliver added value.

However, also here tensions can be identified. A first tension concerns that between actors and institutional context: the issue of legitimacy. Participation in planning is arranged and organised within the governance system and usually related and limited by the construct of jurisdictions, even when a planning policy has clear impact elsewhere too (Amin 2004). The openness of planning processes and the organisation of legitimate planning (and other policy) decisions has been a concern of many studies (e.g. Forester 1999) and are difficult to solve within current governance systems, if possible at all. As has become clear from Randstad 2040 partnerships, and as illustrated by Haughton et al. (2010) in the case of fuzzy boundaries and deliberately in- or excluding stakeholders, the issue of legitimacy will only become more apparent now that soft space arrangement appear.

A third tension in the conceptual model is that between 'actors' and 'space'. The relation between them works in two ways. First, actors' activities impact on land use and spatial development. Whether the effects are considered 'good' or successful depends on one's perspective, but also on the extent to which planning has been able to facilitate and influence actors' decisions. Here the second direction of the relationship comes into play: the manner in which stakeholders conceptualise or frame space. Because of its complexity space is often viewed, framed or conceptualised in simplified forms of 'reality': in spatial concepts. But the main question is whether today's spatial complexity can be translated at all into spatial strategies and in meaningful and durable conceptualisations (Waterhout et al. 2009). It is this tension, between perceived and

‘real’ space, that may lead to wrong solutions for wrong problems. This means that there is an important need in planning and soft space arrangements to organize processes of mutual learning.

Resume

Planning thus is conditioned in several ways by a context to which it adapts, but which itself is continuously changing too. Traditional statutory planning has increasing difficulties to comply with this dynamic and ever more complex context and its intrinsic tensions. Soft space approaches can be understood as a reaction on and a reflection of this context. It complements statutory planning where this is not longer able to reflect the increasing spatial and institutional complexities or to deal with ever more powerful and diverse actors and stakeholders. However, soft space governance is not without problems itself. The next section will develop a first attempt to a research agenda to critically assess soft space governance and planning.

6. A research agenda

At a theoretical level the above can be further elaborated upon by invoking recent work on state theory, rescaling and state spatialities, relational geographies, the postpolitical condition and critiques of mainstream planning theory and practice (Žižec, 2000, Jessop, 2003, Massey 2005, Brenner Haughton et al., 2010, Allmendinger and Haughton 2009). Drawing from these sources, the theoretical framework for this project focuses on the intersection of spaces and processes of governance and government, focusing on the political work done by soft space forms, specifically interrogating the progressive credentials and potentially regressive aspects of this trend. On the positive side, soft spaces provide scope for promoting innovative thinking and reflecting on the real geographies of how markets work, by decoupling the consultative processes from some of the constraints of working within existing political/administrative bounded spaces and the requirements of formal statutory planning, with its public consultations, examinations in public, public inquiries, ministerial appeal and potentially judicial appeal.

Recent work on the postpolitical condition suggests a possible connection here between postpolitical work on the wider, mainly national processes for post-ideological thinking and sub-national or local practices (Žižec 2000, Mouffe 2005, Griffiths 200? Raco 200?). Postpolitics suggests that consensus building, with its emphasis on consultation, partnership and policy integration, has a problematic dimension if this simply provides a means for coalescing around a mainstream view whilst marginalising alternative understandings, voices, and possibilities. From this perspective the dark side of soft space governance might be that it is legitimating a relatively uncritical focus on, for instance, high economic growth strategies, drawing some credibility from its limited engagement with selective actors representing different sectoral interests, for instance environmental protection or social inclusion.

Despite the increasing importance of the post political condition current states are still characterised by a huge influence of politics. However, the balance clearly is shifting into the direction of post politics. To what extent yet is not clear and might vary from country to country. What this means is that current principles related to the functioning of the state are or will become challenged. This is already reflected in a number of spheres of the institutional arrangements relating to the modern state: 1) the shift from government to governance, 2) new democratic arrangements and the search for legitimacy and 3) the changing standards as regards government effectiveness and accountability. These trends indicate the changing balance between government and society and become, amongst others, apparent in soft space arrangements. The following sections elaborate on this.

New informal multi-level governance arrangements

The rescaling of governance, down- or upwards, has been a common, though not a definitive, response to these socio-economic, cultural and geographical developments (Gualini 2006; Allmendinger & Tewdwr-Jones 2006; Goodwin et al. 2005). Soft spaces could be regarded an example of rescaling too, but not a typical one. Rescaling refers to both the ‘hollowing out’ of government as well as the ‘filling in’ of government as new scales of governance are created or strengthened (see for example Goodwin et al. 2005). In the typical approach to rescaling such new scales refer to rather formal arrangements and well-defined ‘hard’ spaces. As has been argued by many observers such formal rescaling generally only provides for temporary solutions to governance issues, if at all. In that sense soft space approaches, whilst also fulfilling the same purposes could be regarded a new, flexible form of rescaling. They address governance issues in rather loose and flexible multi-level way and acknowledge that there is no single appropriate level of governance (Gualini 2006; Healey 2007).

From an analytical perspective soft space approaches can be regarded a pragmatic solution to the governance complexity that characterises many places. The governance landscape has become so complex that it urged the inventors of the original concept of multi-level governance, Marks (1993) and Hooghe (1996), to reconsider their previous ideas, which referred to a hierarchical system of jurisdictions. In a more recent article Hooghe and Marks (2003) distinguish between two basic types or models of governance, simply labelled multi-level governance Type I and Type II. The former refers to the original concept with non-intersecting general-purpose territorial jurisdictions vertically arranged in a hierarchical way, while the latter views governance as a complex, fluid, mostly horizontal patchwork of innumerable, overlapping jurisdictions. Type I governance is designed around a human (usually territorial) community while Type II is centred around particular tasks or policy problems. Under the Type II model, it is not the jurisdictional borders that determine the development of governance arrangements, but the material object at stake. This material object can vary widely in terms of geographical scale. Examples of Type II organisation can be found in the fields of fire protection, water supply, sewerage, parks and recreation, public transport,

hospitals, education etc in which organisations have been created to deliver specific services stretching across various scales and intersecting at various places. Whereas there are many Type II multi-level governance arrangements to be found in the public realm (Hooghe and Marks make mention of 178 Type II arrangements in the canton Zürich, over 300 in Chicago and Denver and over 600 in Houston), many privately organised networks dealing with for example food supply, energy, transportation, health care and advanced economic services, which are highly relevant for territorial development can also be regarded Type II arrangements. In reality multi-level governance arrangements often carry elements of both Type I and II and have a rather hybrid character. The soft space approaches with their fuzzy boundaries reflect awareness of this new reality in a sense that they seem better equipped, at least in a geographical sense, than traditional Type I jurisdictions to form a platform that facilitates the coordination between the various overlapping and intersecting Type II and Type I arrangements.

By analysing soft space approaches in terms of Type I and II, as well as in intermediate definitions the project aims to further define these approaches in terms of governance. Elsewhere there have been distinguished several models of governance. For example, Van Kersbergen and Van Waarden (2004) see no less than nine different models. Risse (2006) on his part, whilst invoking criteria such as hierarchical and non-hierarchical and public and private, sees at least six different models of governance. Benz and Papadopoulos (2006) emphasise the several variations of governance and democracy, each model having its own specifications. However, most governance discussions focus on the functioning of the nation state as such and the vertical relations between its formal administrative units or on international forms of governance, such as the EU. As of yet, little work has been done on defining governance models related to rather informal units such as soft spaces.

Soft Space governance as deliberate democracy

Whereas soft space approaches may form a suitable way to deal with governance complexity, at least temporary, it is not difficult to see that they potentially may be problematic in terms of legitimacy. This becomes clear if soft space is analysed in terms of input and output oriented legitimacy (Scharpf 1997). Whereas the distinction was introduced in the 1970s and applied to nation state system, it has regained interest of scholars analysing European Union democratic processes. This debate on the EU, being a soft space itself (albeit one with clear and hard external boundaries), shows important parallels with regional soft space approaches in a sense that both the EU and soft spaces essentially concern newly defined areas with, at least initially, no established democratic systems. Within nation states the notion of input and output oriented legitimacy could be regarded as interrelated yet complementary to each other. Together they make up of what is understood as democratic legitimacy. However, with the earlier mentioned 'loss of territorial synchrony' also this principle becomes under strain, and a careful analysis of soft space approaches may contribute to understanding how and why this happens as well as provide indications for overcoming this.

In Scharpfs (1999) interpretation input legitimacy relates to the ability of political systems to derive decisions as directly as possible from the individual preferences of the citizens. In today's societies this means that a number of preconditions need to be met such as: transparent representation, acceptance (by minorities) of majority decisions, mutual trust (in the political system), a clearly defined *demos* (people, or constituency) and 'thick' collective identity. Output oriented legitimacy complements input legitimacy as it is mainly interest based rather than identity based and can be achieved in constituencies with only a 'thin' identity. Essentially output legitimacy is based on the ability to developing effective problem-solving capacities. The preconditions are that there is a loosely defined constituency to which the 'goods can be delivered', but even more so that there is some collective agreement about what type of good should be delivered. In terms of soft space approaches legitimacy is compromised on both the input and the output side. Clearly, soft spaces fail on the preconditions for input oriented legitimacy. However, whereas soft space approaches may 'get things done' it could be questioned for whom they do so and if their output represent a majority agreement or is asked for anyhow? One aim of this project is to analyse whether this is generally the case and, if not, what the repercussions are.

In this perspective it is interesting to observe that the overwhelming popularity of soft spaces up until now, and despite their failing (at least theoretically) in terms of legitimacy, has not led to much resistance or, as far as is known, other forms of repercussions. If this is true then soft spaces approaches may indicate the start of an answer to deal with post politics and be perceived a new, acceptable form of what some term 'deliberative democracy', referring to a mere realistic approach to democracy (Hirst 1994). In essence, this suggests that policy networks be extended to include all the governed. "Democracy in this sense," says Hirst (2000: 27), "is about government by information exchange and consent, where organized publics have the means to conduct a dialogue with government and thus hold it to account." In similar vein Sabel and Zeitlin (2008: 273) speak about the European Union as a model of "networked deliberative decision making", which, they argue, partly explains its success. It may well be that the acceptance of soft space approaches could be explained from their ability to act as platforms relating several networks in decision making processes.

Effective government: Values and attitudes in planning

A final element of the post political condition which is relevant for soft spaces is the focus on public bodies in terms of performance, customer orientation and the restructuring of incentives. This broad trend is more commonly referred to as New Public Management as part of a broad neo-liberal shift in public organization and aims to introduce 'good governance' principles that worked in corporate governance into public organizations. Mainly this comes down to bringing management concepts from private business into the public realm (Kersbergen and Van Waarden 2004). Following Sager (2008) emphasis is put on aspects such as entrepreneurialism (Harvey 1989; Friedmann 1993), the depoliticization of decision making (Flinders &

Buller, 2006), and a disaggregation of integrated administrative structures into single purpose semi-independent agencies (referred to a 'agencification') (Christensen & Lægreid 2006). In terms of planning and territorial governance entrepreneurialism reflects the widening responsibility of urban politicians from provision of services, facilities and benefits to local development and employment growth. The notion of a public-private partnership is the centre-piece of this development. Soft space governance arrangements could well be explained in these terms. However, as Sager (2008) shows this new public management turn is not un-problematic for planning systems and cultures as its main principles run counter to intrinsic values and attitudes in planning.

As such soft space approaches may indicate a more fundamental change in planning and territorial governance throughout Europe. Reflecting the general trend of the changing role of public government, the spatial development of urban regions, more than ever, is determined outside the offices of public administration. What we see are new forms of soft space in which the government is not necessarily the initiator or leading actor, but rather takes a merely coordinative and stimulating role to guide the spatial development challenges which emerge out of a vast array of public and private initiatives. By focusing on soft space governance arrangements answers may be provided to the question if and how planning is changing.

7. Conclusion

Soft space governance arrangements as a mode of planning become an increasingly familiar phenomenon in Europe. Soft space governance can be regarded to complement existing statutory planning arrangements, which face increasing difficulty to respond to the context of planning. The conceptual model is one way of conceptualizing this model. By allowing more flexible and creative solutions soft space governance arrangements seem better suited to deal with the context of planning. Currently, however, the characteristics of these soft space approaches are not entirely clear. Initial research has identified and highlighted a few key elements, but little is yet known of legitimacy, governance models used and effectiveness of these soft space approaches. Whilst they have there positive side, there may be a dark side too. This paper presents a very first attempt to develop a research agenda in order to better understand soft space planning and the transformation of planning in Europe.

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