Regional Design in Dutch Transport Planning Strategies

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ABSTRACT – The last decade has witnessed various trends in decentralization of government responsibilities related to spatial planning in the Netherlands and this has resulted in a differing flexibility of the indicative planning frameworks for transport and spatial development. In this article we investigate whether and if so, how revisions of frameworks have influenced the engagement of sub-national governments in ‘regional design’, the formulation of regional development strategies and projects by means of spatial representations, maps and plans. The paper examines one case in which a regional Transit Oriented Development (TOD) strategy has been formulated and implemented in the Netherlands. It analyses the spatial representations produced during the development of these strategies, considers the role of the representations in the decision-making process and analyses the extent to which the spatial representations reflect the decentralization shifts in national transport and land use planning frameworks. The main aim of this paper is to improve understanding of the role of ‘regional design’ in planning processes. Little has been written on this subject to date.

1. Introduction
The last decade has witnessed various trends in decentralization of government responsibilities related to spatial planning in the Netherlands and this has resulted in several revisions to the indicative planning frameworks for transport and spatial development. Since 2000 guidelines published in consecutive national planning reports, albeit remaining indicative, have differed in their degree of detail, related to decision-making processes with various degrees of formality and were to be considered at different moments of these processes. Overall, in a seemingly experimental phase in Dutch planning, the flexibility of indicative planning frameworks has changed substantially and has, through opening a variety of spaces for interpretation, motivated a variety of responses by governance arrangements.
In this article we investigate how revisions of indicative guidelines for the integration of urban and public transport development influenced the engagement of sub-national governments in ‘regional design’, the formulation of regional development strategies and projects by means of spatial representations, maps and plans. We analyze (1) if spatial representation of regional Transit Oriented Development (TOD) referred to indicative guidelines and (2) how references were combined to either comply to rules, embedded in frameworks, or to challenge them in a discretionary way. The main aim of this paper is to improve understanding of the role of ‘regional design’ in planning processes. While devolving responsibilities for planning, the Dutch national government has given the ‘making of projects’ much importance and governance arrangements responded swiftly by engaging in the formulation of incidental development proposals. If and how the formulation of development proposals contributed to planning remains unclear and, as a result, rarely evaluated.

The paper examines one case in which a regional Transit Oriented Development (TOD) strategy has been formulated and implemented in the Netherlands. It analyses the spatial representations produced during the development of these strategies, their references to political normative principles, territorial demarcations and analytical evidence. The paper also considers the role of the representations in the decision-making process and analyses the extent to which the spatial representations reflect the decentralization shifts in national transport and spatial planning frameworks over the last decade. It is divided into four main parts. It begins by setting out the theoretical framework and methodology of the case study research. Second, it deducts episodes from the flexibility of indicative planning frameworks that have occurred in the Netherlands over recent years. Third, it presents a analysis of the selected design-led approach to TOD in the Randstad region. Fourth, the conclusions reflect on the implications of decentralization for ‘regional design’ in the Netherlands.

2. Approach: Equating Regional Design and Discretion

The approach taken in this case study research relies on the hypothesis that regional design, the formulation of regional development projects and strategies, is a planning (and potentially discretionary) practice that evolves (and may be controlled) in the context of indicative planning frameworks. To underpin this approach, we briefly resume theoretical notions on spatial representations, planning concepts, indicative planning frameworks and discretion below.

Several authors, such as De Jonge (2009), Dühr (2004, 2006), Faludi (1996), Kunzmann (1996), Neuman (1996, 2010), Thierstein & Förster (2008), Van Duinen (2004) and Zonneveld (2008), have noted that images, maps and plans, are powerful media in decision-making processes since they are open to interpretations and thus perform as ‘institution builders’ as Neuman (1996, p. 293) labels them. Davoudi (2011), referring to Fischler (1995), distinguishes spatial representations from visualizations. While visualizations enhance communication, spatial representations explicate meaning through references to broader planning frameworks and other authors (Förster, 2009; Dühr, 2005; Van Duinen, 2004) have shown that references, incorporated in representation, may establish an analytical, political and/or organizational logic. When spatial representations are used for analytical reasoning, a hypothesis on spatial development is under investigation and representations refer to (invariable) scientific knowledge. The political logic of representations can, according to Förster (2009), be understood through theories from the field of political sciences and is established through references to values and normative agenda’s. The organizational logic of representations evolves against the background of organizational behaviour.
Representations refer to roles, routines and working areas and such references turn represented spaces into territories or, as Schön (2005, p. 391) explains, areas that are the object of ‘… a concern with regional impacts and incidences of policies and the question of how specific local and regional entities (territories) are affected by those policies’. In conjunction these notions on references to planning domains allow for a distinction of spatial representations by their meaning in planning processes. Notions however also imply that such meaning becomes apparent only when planning frameworks are explicit. For this purpose we have used notions on planning concepts, incorporated in indicative planning frameworks.

The role and nature of indicative planning frameworks has been, in the context of spatial planning, widely discussed among authors (Healey, 2006; Faludi, 2010; Allmendinger & Haughton, 2010). As any other planning framework, indicative planning frameworks establish rules. However, other than regulations and law that are embedded in statutory or legal frameworks, indicative guidelines rely on consent, and such consent is frequently stabilized by conceptual ideas about spatial organization or ‘planning concepts’ (Van Duinen, 2004, 2013; Zonneveld, 1991; Zonneveld & Verwest, 2005). Davoudi (2003) has, elaborating on the use of the concept polycentricity, noted that planning concepts have two dimensions. In their analytical dimension they explain spatial structures by providing a hypothesis on their formation. This hypothesis, an empirical foundation of rules, is derived from and supported by knowledge and information on the way that unplanned and unintended individual action affects spatial development. In their normative dimension planning concepts are a metaphor for desirable spatial structures and used as a guiding principle to achieve a policy goal. Seen notions on spatial representation, we assume here that planning concepts also have an organisational dimension in which they are territories and are used to instruct action through pointing at capacities and responsibilities of actors. The reliance of indicative frameworks on consent implies that dimensions are not necessarily stable, that they may be modified in collaborative planning processes (Van Duinen, 2004; 2013). In negotiations single dimension may be discussed or the way how they are related to support rules. Healey (2006, p. 527) has equated such social construction with governance and spatial planning, ‘the mobilization of concepts of spatial organization with the ambition of accumulating sufficient allocative, authoritative and imaginative force to shape both the materialities and identities of particular places’.

The above summarized notions allow to portray regional design, the production and use of spatial representations in the context of planning concepts, as a discursive practice, discourse being ‘an ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categories through which meaning is given to social and physical phenomena, and which is produced and reproduced through an identifiable set of practices (Hajer & Versteeg, 2005, p. 175).’ When assuming that planning concepts stabilize indicative planning frameworks and the rules they incorporate, a regional design proposal may comply to frameworks through referring to it. Regional design may also be a critical comment on rules. Regional development proposal may highlight a weak empirical foundation of rules, formulated from the point of view of professional expertise (or from an academic stance), it may be a form of political advocacy, suggesting other normative goals than the ones with which rules are associated and/or it may be a pragmatic (or fearful) interpretation of territories, a call to apply rules elsewhere than planning concepts suggest. However, to investigate regional design as such a discretionary planning practices requires not only its conceptualization as an argument but also as an object of control.

Discretion is a form of decision making, generally concerned ‘about making choices between courses of action (Booth, 2007, p. 131)’. What distinguishes discretion from other decision-making is a reference to rules, predefined instructions for action. Discretion is an interpretation of rules with the purpose to bend
them by investigating mutual dependencies among the certainty and flexibility that any guideline contains. In a search for ‘leeway in the interpretation of fact and the application of precedent to particular cases (Booth, 2007, p. 129)’, such action may seek to refine rules, compromise them or suggest new ones. Discretion is usually related to formal rules defined by legal frameworks but has also been associated with indicative guidelines, embedded in indicative planning frameworks (Booth, 2007; Tewdwr-Jones, 1999; Janssen-Jansen & Woltjer, 2010). In this context complication is added though. The reliance on consent of both, the construction and interpretation of rules raises questions about who exercises discretionary behaviour and who constrains it. Both, discretion and its control, rely on agreement on ‘schemes of values’, acquired through political action, administrative engagement and/or professional involvement (Booth, 2007, p. 136). Control may take the form of meta-governance, through the provision of funding and expertise, governments may ‘act as the primary organizer of the dialogue among policy communities’, ‘deploy (…) organizational intelligence and information’, ‘provide rules for participation’, ‘organize negotiations’, serve as a ‘court of appeal’, among others mechanisms (Jessop, 2004, p. 13). Whatever action is taken and whoever controls discretionary power, action is most decisively influenced by the flexibility of frameworks.

Above we have noted that regional design is a practice concerned about the formulations of regional development proposals by means of spatial representations. Such representations (1) explicate analytical knowledge, (2) allocate meaning in politics and normative goal setting and (3) indicate impacts and incidences of policies. In the context of planning concepts regional design becomes a discursive practice. Distinct references to dimensions of planning concepts, that stabilize rules, result in distinct regional design practices. The formulation of a development proposal may be a form of political advocacy, a call for or a comment on the empirical foundation of rules or a call for alternative territories. When equating regional design with discretion, forms of control become apparent. It may be influenced by different forms of ‘meta-governance’, in outline ways how governments have sought to stimulate development. Most decisively regional design is controlled by the flexibility of indicative frameworks.

This paper applies the above described framework to one case: a regional Transit Oriented Development (TOD) strategy in the southern part of the Randstad region in the Netherlands. The choice of the case has been motivated by its concern about a regional development strategy, an employment of several regional design practices during argumentations on the strategy and the time span across which argumentations spanned (see trends in decentralization). The case was also aligned with governance conditions under consideration in the research: the strategy was established and perpetuated by several partnerships among de-central governments and (at times) private partners and gained attention by the national government several times.

During the research three stages were passed. The 1st stage of the research, an analysis of the flexibility of indicative planning frameworks employed by the Dutch national government since 2000 clarified the context of the case study. Specific attention was given to guidelines for the integration of public transport and spatial development. The analysis drew on publicly available policy documents, including the Dutch national reports on planning and documents setting out revisions of planning protocols. Conceptual ideas about spatial organization incorporated in these documents were, against a general definition of regional TOD, assessed on the degree of detail to which analytical, normative and organizational dimensions of concepts were defined. Although the analysis focused on the content of frameworks, it was also investigated how planning issues related to (more or less formal) subsequent decision-making processes and at which moment of these they were to be considered. From differing degrees of flexibility, planning
episodes were deducted. Results of the analysis were underpinned by academic literature, reviewing Dutch planning reforms, the emergence and role of planning concepts in recent Dutch planning and governance practices since 2000.

In a 2nd stage of the case study the spatial representations that were produced and used by governance arrangements, concerned about the regional TOD strategy under investigation, were the object of research. Representations were assessed on their references to analytical evidence, normative guiding principles and territories, set out in indicative frameworks (or not). References to planning domains were in the first instance deducted from an analysis of the key of representations. In case of unclear references, clarification was sought for in explanatory text. In a 3rd concluding stage of the research results from the internal analysis were used to identify types of policy argumentations, equate them with types of discretionary action and conclude on differences among actions in planning episodes. Before turning our attention to the case, we would like to note that the paper is work in progress and that a final version of it will incorporate, next to the single case that is described here, two more cases, located in the northern part of the Randstad Holland. These cases will strengthen the external validity of results. We also intend to triangulate findings through interviews with key actors in departments at the national government across episodes and key players in the regional TOD strategies.

3. Trends in decentralization: The flexibility of Dutch indicative planning frameworks since 2000

Episode 1: 5th Report on Planning and the National Spatial Strategy

The first indicative planning framework that explicitly discussed the decentralization of planning tasks in the Netherlands was incorporated in the Fifth Report on Spatial Planning (VROM, 2001). It was a response to substantial dissatisfaction about earlier frameworks, set out in the Fourth report (1988) and the Fourth report Extra (1993) (Hajer & Zonneveld, 2000). Unrest found an influential expression in a review of these frameworks by an governmental council in 1998 (WRR, 1999, p. 72-73). Although the 4th reports’ frameworks had sought to incorporate an increasing involvement of tiers and levels of government and also private actors (through, for example, prioritizing urban agglomerations, development along transport corridors and key projects), the council concluded their review with uncovering a mismatch among the deliberate involvement of actors in development and guidelines to steer such engagement, a call for the modernization of deliberation structures and more open planning protocols. More fundamentally, new ideas on spatial organization were seen to be necessary to balance plan-led planning with development proposals.

In search for a new balance among planning and development practices, the Fifth report posed two ideas about spatial organisation. The first idea, the so called Ruimtelijke Hoofdstructuur (Spatial Main Structure), pointed at three spatial conditions of national importance (soil, main transport networks and urban occupation). Their contagious, integrated development was associated with a contained yet by the market demanded urbanization (VROM, 2001, p. 25). The plea for integration did not rely on single, instrumental evidence but on an informational background, compiled in an atlas. The need to integrate transport and urban development was related to several empirical observations in this compilation, for example, on economic development and urbanization trends, and there were also suggestions on where to consider such dependencies (for example around ‘nodes’ of public transport). The second idea introduced an organisational principle. To improve the international concurrence position of The Netherlands the concept of Stedelijke Netwerken (Urban Networks) (VROM, 2002, p.11), emphasized on the consideration
of activity and travel patterns on scales above the city regional one. If these patterns are a threat or an opportunity to the imagined vitality and diversity of regions was to be decided by de-central governments tough. These were asked to consider the concept but to deduct forms of planning and cooperation themselves (VROM & RPD, 2001, p. 269).

The highly flexible indicative framework that the 5th report on planning suggested encouraged optimism among governance arrangements but never became effective. In April 2002 the Dutch government fell over its involvement in the Bosnian War and in November 2002 a new government with a new political orientation announced the making of a another report on planning. For this purpose the four ministries that had increasingly engaged in spatial planning from the 1980s onward, published their own ideas about spatial organization first. The ministry of Economic Affairs suggested, roughly along the lines of long standing hypotheses on dependencies among transport and economic development from the field of economic geography, to sustain the international concurrence position of economic core areas by an improvement of accessibility within and among these regions (EZ, 2004). These ideas, analytically underpinned by few evidence of concentrations of employment within the Netherlands (p. 30), found their territorial dimension not in the form of regional networks though. Instead the Ministry of Economic Affairs promoted the implementation of policies in corridors to, as Van Duinen (2004) has shown, weaken the tight regime of compact urban development, promoted by the ministry of VROM.

Support for these ideas of the ministry of economic affairs came from the side of the ministry of Transport and Water. Also the Nota Mobiliteit (Mobility Report) (V&W & VROM, 2004) suggested a focus on urban development along transport corridors for the purpose of a better economic performance (p. 15, p. 37). Evidence taken up in this perspective referred to another hypothesis tough, namely that there are correlations among urbanization and transport use (p. 35, 38, 46). The measuring of travel times and patterns delivered a spatial match with the ideas that the ministry of Economic Affairs has brought up: it were the economic core areas where most people in the Netherlands live and work that suffered most from congestion and where planning was most required. The ministry of VROM sustained its earlier ideas, the Spatial Main Structure and the organisational principles introduced by the concept of Urban Networks and the first version of the Nota Ruimte (National Spatial Strategy) (VROM et al., 2004), published in 2004, all these ideas were embraced. The overall result was a diffuse construction in which zones were rather associated with each other than being linked by common goals and in which analytical and organizational ideas mingled. To clarify its role in the increasingly complex situation the ministry of VROM added explanations on how to plan to the end of the document. It explained that it intends to have two responsibilities in future, one for the system and one for results. Attached to its systeemverantwoordelijkheid (responsibility for the system) was support to the formation of effective governance arrangements, largely through the provision of knowledge and expertise. Attached to its resultaatverantwoordelijkheid (responsibility for results) was investment into largely infrastructure projects and the allocation of funds was set out in more detail in subsequent documents by ministry of Transport and Water.

Intermezzo: Randstad Urgent, Structural Vision Randstad 2040, change of the MIRT program and the New Spatial Planning Act

The weak relations among spatial and organisational principles in the National Spatial Strategy, favouring pragmatic interpretations by semi-formal governance arrangements, untied from 2005 onward unrest in the Dutch parliament. Dissatisfaction was specifically caused by the way how the allocation of national infrastructure funds was associated with a fuzzy range of normative principles and found its expression in
March 2005 in the Motie Lemstra (Petition Lemstra) (Eerste Kamer, 2005). The call for a better underpinning of long term investment into infrastructure was accepted by the First Chamber in January 2006 but it took a while until the government responded as in June 2006 it turned into a de-missionary minority cabinet. A new government, in place in February 2007, reacted in two ways. It announced to reform the way it allocates funding for infrastructure and it announced the making of a new strategy, one being spatially confined to the Randstad region.

The reform of the Meerjarenprogramma Infrastructuur (MIT) (Long-Term Programme for Infrastructure and Transportation) facilitated the opening up of the program, which was first concerned about development of main infrastructure only, to incorporate consideration about spatial development (for a review, see Spaans et al., 2012). This change, agreed upon in February 2007, took effect in in the same year but immediately raised new concerns. Anticipating on delays of implementation processes caused by the broadened scope of MIRT projects, a commission suggested to revise the highly technical ‘rules of the game’, required procedures in the allocation of funding (Commissie Versnelling Besluitvorming Infrastructurale Projecten, 2008). One of the main changes was a consideration of sector issues at early moments of decision making to avoid conflict at later stages. Since 2009, preferred projects that enter a more detailed an formal second phase, require agreement among the national government and sub-national governments in regions first and these coalitions are required to formulate Gebiedsagenda (Area Agenda) in which they embed their claims for funding in projects (their territorial agenda) in a regional vision (their ideas about normative goals), deducted from observations of problems and opportunities (an empirical foundation).

The formulation of a strategy to address spatial development in the Randstad region was from the beginning onward developed along two, albeit related tracks. The ministry of Transport was to guide, for the sake of short term effect, a selection process to the large amount of infrastructure projects that had, due to delays in implementation processes and an increased scope of projects, started to crowd the national agenda. This track was called Randstad Urgent (V&W, 2007). The ministry of VROM was to establish normative guiding principles for longer term selection processes and rest these principles on a stable societal base: The Structural Vision Randstad 2040 (VROM, 2008). The making of the Structural Vision has been carried out in great haste and caused some controversies about the way it was accomplished. However, the final framework, published in September 2008, referred back to many of the principle ideas that have ordered planning by the ministry of VROM over the last decade, among them concentration of urbanisation within existing city limits, spatial differentiation in the form of landscapes of national and metropolitan importance and economic competitiveness in the form of ‘top functions’ (VROM, 2008, p. 94). The indicative framework differed from earlier ones in its lack of rules tough. Few long term infrastructure projects were adopted from V&W programs. Besides these, instructions on how to plan were, as agreed upon earlier, reserved for being the object of the Randstad Urgent document.

In July 2008 a new Spatial Planning Act became effective. This act clarified the planning protocol in the context of decentralized planning. It approved the formal status of national indicative plans but asked, to foster regional planning and enhance the coordination among planning at levels, the provincial and local governments to also set out such frameworks (Needham, 2005). How fundamental changes were, is, seen the status of structural visions (self-binding), the instruments that levels gained and the intense informal negotiations that were the rule not the exception before, still controversially discussed. The act however required all levels to set out their structural visions in the first place and this obligations has added to the
complexity of planning in an intermediate period, more concerned about the revision of indicative frameworks than their consideration in planning.

**Episode 2: National Structural Vision**

In July 2011, the ministry of Transport and The Environment (the ministries of VROM and V&W have merged in the meantime) published its draft National Structural Vision and in March 2012 the final version (I&M, 2012) became available, substituting all earlier reports (National Spatial Strategy, Mobility Report, Structural Vision Randstad 2040). Its title, summarizing the employed normative principles in the slogan ‘The Netherlands, competitive, accessible, livable and safe’ (p.1) indicated a, in respect to earlier reports, sharper move towards a neo-liberal policy agenda. The core idea about a *Nationale Ruimtelijke Hoofsstructuur* (National Spatial Main Structure) expressed this selectivity. Icons, representing grown-up economic sectors and infrastructure hubs were grouped by roughly the same clouds that have hovered above Dutch regions since the Ministry of Economic Affairs got involved in planning in 2004 and were linked by the approximately the same transport lines.

The vision was, specifically by advocates of a spatial planning approach, received with despair. As Waterhout et al. (2012, p. 6) have noted in their exploration of neo-liberalization processes in The Netherlands, ‘…when the roll-with-it neo-liberal minority coalition led by Mark Rutte took office in 2010, everything pointed towards a complete abolition of planning at the national level. (…), (S)patial planning in all its manifestations, even when it aims to facilitate economic development, is judged a hindrance for the freedom of individuals and companies.’ This observation is approved through the large amount of non-spatial policies incorporated in the report, but the framework also included few but decisively defined instructions for planning and the integration of transport and urban development more specifically. A monitor, measuring accessibility by an indicator combining travel times by car and public transport over time was introduced to allocate future investment into infrastructure first and evaluate it later on. In their ex-ante evaluation the Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL, 2011) posed, didactically discussing appropriate scientific evidence for policies driven by an economic development agenda (p.xx), that this indicator does not take account of agglomeration benefits that occur through the proximity of inhabitants and labour markets in regions. The spatial outcome that a first application of the indicators delivered was not different from earlier reports though. Attention remained focused on highly populated regions in The Netherlands, among them the Randstad. What changed however was the room for interpretation, the flexibility of the framework in respect to alternative points of view.

**Resuming trends**

The theoretical framework that is employed in this case study gives the flexibility of indicative planning frameworks, deducted from the degree of detail to which guidelines are defined and embedded in normative agendas and evidence, an important role in indicative planning. When reviewing consecutive frameworks on these issues it can be argued that their flexibility has substantially decreased. While the 5th report (and to a only slightly lesser degree the National Spatial Strategy) provided an informational background from which governance arrangements were encouraged to select appropriate proof for their preferred regional development strategies, the National Structural Vision decisively defined such evidence in advance and formalized its consideration simultaneously. When reviewing consecutive planning frameworks on their normative scope it can be concluded that the basic principles behind Dutch planning (Hajer & Zonneveld, 2000), including the concentration of urbanization and spatial cohesion, differentiation, hierarchy and justice remained valid until the publication of the National Spatial Vision in 2010. The 5th report, the National Spatial Strategy and the Structural Vision Randstad 2040 certainly
adjusted to the political orientation of governments, with an increasing attention to the performance of economic sectors in planning. However, it was only the National Structural Vision that sharpened focus on goals, arguably decentralizing other political argumentation in the face of the New Spatial Planning Act. When reviewing the territorial dimension of frameworks the most important change is a rising importance of ‘projects’, that require, in one way or the other, funding by the national government. A counter development to this change can be seen in the increasing scope of infrastructure projects and a required integration with other than transport issues. We have also shown that such consideration was simultaneously confined by revisions of procedures that have increased the certainty of frameworks also.

The aim of this broad brush summary of an admittedly complex process is to clarify the context of regional design practices that have emerged in the same period. Below we analyze spatial representation that have been used in policy argumentations that were concerned about a regional TOD strategy in the southern part of the Randstad Holland. We analyze (1) if spatial representation of regional Transit Oriented Development (TOD) development proposals of sub-national governments referred to indicative guidelines and (2) how references were combined to either comply to rules, embedded in frameworks, or to challenge them in a discretionary way.

4. Regional design: changing aspects of spatial representations in the Stedenbaan case

Episode 1: Stedenbaan

The case that is examined in this paper is positioned in the Southern part of the Randstad region. The area is divided into one province and roughly 65 municipalities, two city regions around the large cities of Rotterdam and The Hague (municipalities in these regions are obliged to coordinate spatial development and operate on a structural legal basis) and three other sub-regions around medium-sized cities (municipalities cooperate based on voluntary agreement), among other sector administrations. The TOD strategy analyzed here emerged in the early 2000s and was first called Stedenbaan (Cities Line). It was (and still is) concerned about integrated public transport and urban development around the roughly 35 stations of the three oldest rail lines in South Holland, stretching from Leiden to Dordrecht, from Rotterdam to Gouda and from The Hague to Gouda.

The first policy document in which the Stedenbaan strategy was set out as a regional TOD strategy was published in 2003 by a partnership among the province of South Holland, the municipalities of The Hague and Rotterdam and the five sub-regions in South Holland (Zuidvleugelbureau & Platform Zuidvleugel, 2003). The Platform Zuidvleugel (Platform South Wing) authored the publication, but it was above all the province of South Holland who had engaged in the formulation of the strategy. The Stedenbaan project was a claim for national investment into public transport infrastructure by the provincial transport department originally: an increase of the frequency of train services on the rail lines (and an increase of rail capacity for this purpose) was seen to be necessary to accommodate travel demands. The provincial spatial planning department produced, on behalf of and strongly promoted by its director, the first argument to turn this claim for improvements of transport into a proposal for an integrated TOD strategy (Balz & Zonneveld, 2014).

The document called De Stedenbaan (The Stedenbaan) contained a sequence of four spatial representations that set out, in conjunction and through their references to planning domains, a brief story line. The first two maps indicated (1) a network value for public transport accessibility in single stations and (2) densities in station areas, expressed in a floor space index (FSI). A third map, referring to the
hypothesis that these characteristics are correlated, showed future densities in stations. The sequence did
not restrict argumentation to the plausibility of a, from a political stance, desirable concentration of urban
development though. The fourth representation associated potentialities for higher densities loosely with
municipal territories, land-use plans in the influence area of Stedenbaan stations (deducted from the
accessibility of stations by slow traffic). Concluding the series, it suggested that revisions of these plans
ought to take account of the development potentials that stem from the mutual impact that public transport
and urban development have on each other.

The strategy evolved in the aftermath of the 5th report of planning and ongoing informal negotiations on
the National Spatial Strategy. This context can be traced back not only in the name of the author but also
in the document itself. The Zuidvleugel (South Wing) was one of the urban networks that the national
government has prescribed to frame regional cooperation. Textual expression in the Stedenbaan document
defined the South Wing vaguely as a range of urban areas and business areas in South Holland that are
tied together by peri-urban open areas. Spatial representations referred to cooperation, that was to be
deduced from ‘networks’, through calling a broad selection of regional public transport lines (rail, light-
rail, metro, fast-tram) Zuidvleugelnet (South Wing Network). That the oldest rail lines, the Stedenbaan
lines, became part of a more thoroughly defined planning strategy was motivated in text only. In
metaphorical expressions these lines were seen to be the ‘back bone’ and ‘central nervous system’ of
variably the Delta Metropolis or the South Wing. As will be shown below this softly drawn territorial
boundary between the Stedenbaan and the South Wing Network remained to be an issue in argumentations
on the strategy from then on.

Around 2005 the emerging Stedenbaan strategy informed organisational change. The South Wing
partnership established the Programma bureau Stedenbaan (Program Office Stedenbaan), a small bureau
with the task to promote the strategy among its partners and others. The national government had
indicated in negotiations on the National Spatial Strategy that the strategy might be a case for regionally
coordinated planning and therefore deserve support but also expressed doubts: it feared that it was a claim
for investment in infrastructure only, disguised in a spatial planning fashion, and requested more prove on
the benefits of integration (VROM et al., 2004). The Dutch National Railway Company (NS) carried out
research to investigate whether, and if so, how an intensification of land-uses around Stedenbaan stations
contributes to the efficiency of their transport services (Stuurgroep Stedenbaan, 2005). Results of the
business case showed that an increase of the frequency of trains on the Stedenbaan lines from four to six
trains per hour would become feasible if 40.000 houses and 2.2mio square meters of working space would
be built in the vicinity of stations. This result was laid down in a concept agreement among the NS and the
South Wing partnership and became, as the request of the national government, an issue in further
argumentations.

In the same time period two design processes have been carried out, partially referring to ongoing
negotiations and partially not. In 2005, the province of South Holland commissioned a professional urban
design practice to further investigate the differentiation of station areas along the Stedenbaan, first
introduced in 2003 through a distinction of stations by their accessibility. The proposal had the title
Milieudifferentiatie langs de Stedenbaan (Differentiation of Environments along the Stedenbaan) (Urban
Unlimited, 2005). It was based on the hypothesis that different social groups have not only distinct travel
demands but also employ distinct ways how they combine their origins and destinations in chains while
travelling. Representations, taken up in the final report, supported this hypothesis through elaborate
evidence on, for instance, demographic trends and travel patterns. Planning principles to satisfy mobility
demands were seen to be public-private cooperation on the local level (local TOD) and some sub-regional coordination in territories deducted from concentrations of regional facilities, their accessibility and the reach of user groups. The design, carried out under the Interreg IIIC program, showed little reference to the ongoing negotiations among potential partners in planning though. It was another design initiative that shortly after elaborated on these.

In 2005, the former Platform Zuidvleugel, now called Bestuurlijk Platform Zuidvleugel (BPZ, Administrative Platform South Wing) engaged in a policy institute that was initiated by the province of South Holland in 2002 and that was to investigate the scope of the conceptual idea ‘urban network’ that the national government had consolidated in the National Spatial Strategy in 2004. The so called Atelier Zuidvleugel (Studio South Wing) was asked to explore responsibilities of governance arrangements for regional planning in the South Wing (Balz & Zonneveld, 2014) through the design of region-specific development proposals. The studio was largely financed by the province but received support by the ministry of VROM also. Arguably interested in ways how interpretations of the concept by governance arrangements contribute to its planning agenda, the ministry provided funding for the initiative, took place in its steering group and made information and knowledge available when needed.

The first commission that was given to the Studio South Wing was concerned about the Stedenbaan strategy and given to it by the Program Office Stedenbaan. The commission was labelled Spatial Inventory Stedenbaan (Atelier Zuidvleugel, 2005). It was not to be concerned about visionary futures but to stabilize agreement that has been reached so far instead. Representations produced by the studio in a first phase were alignments of the representations that have been produced in 2003 to the interests of the ones who sustained the strategy since then (Atelier Zuidvleugel, 2006a). Density was, for example, not expressed in FSI anymore but in an amount of inhabitants and jobs, indicators more useful in relation to travel demands. Urbanization was thoroughly distinguished by categories that formally structure the municipal land-use plans, thus referring the strategy more strongly to the municipal level. As Balz and Zonneveld (2014) have shown, the most decisive spatial representation, produced by the studio in this phase of the design process, showed land-use plans under revision. It was not more elaborate empirical evidence nor a more persuasive agenda that perpetuated the strategy but a more stable reference to implementation that enhanced institutional capacity, also among politicians.

The Studio South Wing had, next to its direct commissioners for the Stedenbaan project also to fulfil the broader agenda of the ones who have set up the studio in the first place. Specifically on behalf of the province of South Holland it was to investigate a need for regional coordination within the urban network South Wing. For this purpose it focused, in a second phase of the design process on an investigation of normative goals that were seen to motivate regional planning in by then current policy documents. The analysis concluded with three spatial representations (Atelier Zuidvleugel, 2006b). As earlier argumentations the maps referred to the assumption that densities and transport accessibility influence each other. Through their differences, in the form of scenario’s, they however stressed how different normative principles (concentration of land-uses, differentiation and sustainability) may shape the distribution of land-uses along the Stedenbaan. Results were evaluated against by then current demands for houses and offices and this evaluation demonstrated that, without regional coordination, supply might turn out to be excessive.

The results of the design practices that have been carried out in 2005 and 2006 were in 2007 used in a policy document in which the BPZ set out the ambition of its Stedenbaan strategy (Bestuurlijk Platform
The main issue in this document was the agreement among the NS and the BPZ (see above). This agreement was under discussion since 2005 and signed in 2007 finally (Provincie Zuid-Holland et al., 2007). An additional study into the accessibility of stations by slow traffic has, in the meantime, confirmed the earlier estimated influence areas and thus the selection of land-use plans that fell under the agreement and became the object of a monitor to control its fulfilment (DHV Ruimte en Mobiliteit BV, 2006). Despite elaborate argumentation for its importance, control on a diversification of land-uses was made a voluntary engagement of the two city regions only.

**Intermezzo: Zuidvleugelnet**

Above it was also shown that the years after 2007 saw an accumulation of planning reforms and revisions of planning frameworks, that tied together two planning episodes with substantially differing certainties. In July 2008 a new Spatial Planning Act became effective, requiring all governments to formulate structural visions. Although the ministry of VROM knew that it was to engage in the formulation of a vision with a national scope soon, in haste it assembled its supra-regional Structural Vision Randstad 2040. The ministry of Water and Transport simultaneously implemented its Randstad Urgent Program, selecting existing projects of Randstad importance, among them many MIRT projects that just had, due to the reform of the MIRT program in 2007, grown in scope considerably. The reform of MIRT procedures required regional coalitions of sub-national governments also to formulate visions to secure funding for new projects simultaneously. Partners in the governance arrangements that were described above participated more or less intensively in several of these processes and, as we will show below, the Stedenbaan strategy diffused into several new planning frameworks.

The new Spatial Planning Act defined structural visions to be self-binding, but provided governments, among them provincial ones, with some legal instruments to achieve their goals and asked them to set out visions and the use of (legal and other) instruments in two documents apart. The first concept Structural Vision South Holland (preceding yearly revisions from then on) was published in September 2009 (Provincie Zuid-Holland, 2009). It included two spatial representations that set out a distinction among future ‘functions’ (‘what comes where’, perpetuating the practice of earlier zoning plans) and future ‘qualities’ (‘where and how’, motivating indicative guideline for planning). Aspects of the Stedenbaan and the South Wing Network were dissected and spread across these representations. The representation of qualities showed a broad range of categories of urbanization, among them cities and villages, historic and central cities and also urban areas that are well served by public transport. In the function map the diversity was brought back to a more simple differentiation among areas that are or are not served by high quality public transport and the former ones were, in text, associated with a broad range of planning measures, among them funding for infrastructure and also the Stedenbaan strategy.

While preparing its structural vision, the province of South Holland also participated, in differing arrangements with other partners, in other processes. In the dawn of the selection process of projects to be incorporated in the Randstad Urgent program, the secretaries of the four large cities and the four provinces in the Randstad region put together a wish list of projects, including the Stedenbaan project (albeit with minor success). Another cooperation evolved in the context of the new MIRT rules of the game. These rules required de-central governments in regions to develop, in cooperation with the national government, normative principles that can serve as a backdrop in selection procedures for new investment in infrastructure. For this purpose the public transport authorities of the city-region of Rotterdam, the city-region of The Hague and the province, assembled and produced a document called Ambitienota.
The document contained several spatial representation which mainly referred to territories that have been agreed upon earlier onward, by the authors of the document but also others. The network of public transport lines that was shown consisted of the high quality public transport lines of the South Wing Network but also included fast bus lines. The extended network was deliberately adopted from the OV Bureau Randstad (Ov-bureau Randstad, 2009), a cooperation of transport authorities in the Randstad region, who’s merging became a Randstad Urgent project. It showed the formally adopted MIRT projects in all phases and it indicated a range of development zones, in outline the key projects that were promoted by the South Wing partnership since roughly 2005. An additional map combined projects in in areas where internationally operating sectors operate, in this way referring to the emerging national policies to enhance the economic performance of these. In an attempt to structure all planning measures, a phasing strategy was employed and this organizational design was set out in a series of representations. The Stedenbaan strategy found no specific mentioning in the representations but was mentioned in the text as an exemplary cooperation among partners to enhance the overall approach. It was, as in the provincial structural visions, the larger South Wing Network, that seemed to best frame planning.

**Episode 2: StedenbaanPlus**

Above it was noted that one purpose of the new MIRT rules of the game was to allocate agreement for the selection of projects that gain funding by the national government at an early moment of decision making to avoid conflict and delays later on. As was shown above, the South Wing Network turned out to frame agreement well but it was not very selective. In April 2010, the partnership among the province of South Holland and the city regions of The Hague and Rotterdam, now called Kernteam Zuidvleugelnet (Core Team South Wing Network) published a document that, preparing for negotiations with the national government, set out ideas about how it intended to achieve its vision (Kernteam Zuidvleugelnet, 2010). In the introduction the development of South Wing Network was loosely associated with the formation of a metropolitan region around the Hague and Rotterdam and associated with many national policies, among them the projects from the current MIRT program, investment into rail capacity (the so called Programma Hoogfrequent Spoor), the intention for a Randstad planning authority and an upcoming national note on public transport. Representations, taken up in the document portrayed a strategy, favored by the core team.

While earlier series of representations have split up the development of the network by time (phasing), representations in this report sought to prioritize it by ‘qualities’ and in this context, the Stedenbaan strategy was prominently re-introduced. Both representations and text referred to its evidence base, its norms and the way it facilitated coordination among public transport and land-use development. The document suggested expanding the strategy not only spatially to the larger South Wing Network but also made suggestions to enlarge its scope content-wise. By considering relations among public transport development and the development of offices, for instance, it was associated a balanced market for offices (a market that just had substantially destabilized the Dutch economy). Concluding representations used these notions to prioritize investment in a still, probably pragmatic, broad selection, which was not approved by the Dutch national government though.

In the final document that set out the agreement among the national government and the Core Team South Wing Network on future projects and programs (Rijksoverheid & Zuidvleugelpartners, 2010), both, the Stedenbaan and the South Wing Network played a minor role as one of roughly 35 projects. While in
earlier documents these networks were seen to facilitate the emergence of a well-functioning metropolitan region, it were a range of areas with differing economic top sectors that were both, a reason and motivation, for planning now. Research into the selection of sectors (and deducted territories) was facilitated by the national government (the ministry of Economic Affairs) and, in the document, underpinned by their productivity. Employing the hypothesis that these sector ‘push’ general welfare, a multitude of mostly local projects were selected to be appropriate to achieve this goal.

While partners of the former BPZ associated in new partnerships to promote their position in negotiations with the national government, the Programmabureau Stedenbaan scaled up its Stedenbaan strategy also (Programmabureau StedenbaanPlus, 2011). To reflect on the implications of such a step, it set up a research agenda of its own. In the first instance, research was to confirm the influence areas that are its planning through the agreement among the NS and the BPZ once more (TU Delft, 2011). A second purpose was to reflect on the feasibility of the strategy in the face of an enlarged institutional context that incorporated not only the NS but also other transport companies active in the service of the South Wing Network, a much larger group of municipalities and other authorities and also private actors. Argumentations found little expression in spatial representations but a representation that was taken up in several documents of the organisation (for example Programmabureau StedenbaanPlus, 2012) showed that the issue was solved in a pragmatic way: to scale up its strategy, the office suggested to include not all other stations of the South Wing Network, but only the ones that are served by the NS, therefore a strategy that was motivated by organizational principles only.

From 2011 onward the Stedenbaan strategy remained a planning object in several policy processes, among them the continuing formulation of the structural vision South Holland. Although the Programmabureau Stedenbaan was abolished in 2014, yearly publications still trace results of the Stedenbaan monitor. Additional evidence on the importance of the strategy was facilitated by the Netherlands Foundation of Scientific Research. Since these argumentations exceed the time frame of the analysis they are not considered in detail. Instead we turn our attention to conclusions.

5. Conclusions

The results of one case study presented in this paper are preliminary results of a larger research effort in which several case studies will be carried out. We therefore note that our conclusions are preliminary. The context of the case study was defined by an analysis of two episodes in Dutch planning with indicative planning frameworks that differed in their degree of flexibility. In this context, we examined if spatial representation of regional Transit Oriented Development (TOD) referred to indicative guidelines above. Below we summarize observations to respond to our second research question: how references were combined to either comply to rules, embedded in frameworks, or to challenge them in a discretionary way.

Above, under the header ‘trends in decentralisation’, it was shown that the years before 2007 knew highly flexible indicative planning frameworks. Conceptual ideas about spatial organization in this episode relied on a broad informational background and had a broad normative scope. The conception of ‘urban networks’ was above all a soft territory, a call to governance arrangements to imagine planning in regions themselves. When analyzing spatial representations of the Stedenbaan strategy on references to these frameworks, it becomes, not surprisingly, apparent that the strategy matched expectations. It was in conformance with the long-standing goal to concentrate urbanization and deducted a distinct planning space from the suggested urban network territory. Argumentations were perpetuated largely through collaboration. The national government has, through the provision of funding and expertise but also
through expressing doubts in informal negotiations, encouraged a refinement of the strategy which finally
was stabilized by a highly consistent internal argumentation and institutional capacity for planning at the
municipal level and at the NS.

Above it was also shown that the years after 2007 saw an accumulation of planning reforms and revisions
of planning frameworks that tied together two planning episodes with substantially differing flexibilities.
In this context the Stedenbaan strategy diffused, with little additional argumentation, into several other
planning strategies, a process that was complex and difficult to trace. However, resuming this phase, it can
be argued that it turned, in anticipation of more certain planning frameworks, into a case, an exemplary
strategy and cooperation referred to in new claims for planning. When turbulences in the intermediate
period had settled, this new role of the Stedenbaan strategy became specifically apparent against a broad
consensus among sub-national governments on a larger planning space, that of the South Wing Network.
In the context of the National Structural Vision, that confirmed the emerging trend towards more certain
frameworks, the strategy diminished in importance and specifically so since it did not match ideas of the
national government on how to plan anymore. Spatial representations, produced and used in this episode,
concerned argumentations on the organization of planning mostly. Discretionary action, in the form of
alternative territories, was rejected tough.

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