4 Regional design in the context of fragmented territorial governance: South Wing Studio

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ABSTRACT

In the Netherlands, the formation of governance arrangements around planning issues that cross administrative boundaries has been assisted frequently by a design approach that is often referred to as "regional design". This is a distinctive method of policy argumentation that makes use of spatial representations of the plausible future of regions. Such representations are intended not only to indicate physical changes, but also to stimulate debate on sharing responsibilities and resources for planning tasks among planning actors. This paper contributes to a better understanding of the performance of regional design in the context of fragmented regional governance through a case study in the southern part of the Randstad in the Netherlands. We argue that regional design has contributed to institutional capacity in a complex polycentric and, looking at the governance structure, pluricentric region like the Randstad South Wing, largely by allowing for multiple interpretations.

KEYWORDS

Regional governance, planning concepts, regional design, Randstad, the Netherlands

4.1 Introduction: Regional design and its performance

4.1.1 The rise of design-led approaches in Dutch regional planning

Since the early 1990s, planning approaches in European regions have shifted as a result of the influence of emerging spatial patterns of interaction and movement, and, alongside, "a relative decline of the role of the state, a growing involvement of nongovernmental actors in a range of state functions, the emergence of new forms of multi-agency partnerships and more flexible forms of networking at various spatial scales" (Davoudi, 2008, p.63). The Netherlands is no exception. Here, a new planning approach has emerged, where "…. planners [...] began to promote constructive ways into actively developing new perspectives for the future instead of merely relying on protective and prohibitive regulation [...]" (Salet and Woltjer, 2009, p.236). The new approach has been characterized "... by a more involved and anticipatory activity by collaborating public and private agencies, stimulating the likelihood of implementation, rather than public agencies setting limits by decree" (Salet and Woltjer, 2009, p.236).

The emergence of what in more general terms is often described as strategic spatial planning has stimulated a search for processes and tools to support decision-making (Franzen et al., 2011). One approach which gained importance over the past decade was regional design. Quite a large number of initiatives have employed the design of spatial representations of the plausible future of regions in negotiations and decision- making about territorial change and spatial transformation (Hartman et al., 2011). Design processes have, for example, been used for the preparation of the Structural Vision Randstad 2040, an indicative framework for the development of the Randstad, published by the Dutch national government in 2008 (for a review of the making of this document, see Blank et al. (2009).

The aim of design-led approaches was not just to define physical interventions, but also to contribute to the creation of institutional and organizational capacity. This new development-oriented planning style calls for improved alignments between governmental agencies and societal actors. Many regional design initiatives have been taken by public authorities that have included private and civil actors (Hajer, 2005, Hajer et al., 2006). The idea was that regional design would help

spatial planning fall “on the ground”, i.e. indicate territories that fit the capacities of governance arrangements and vice versa. Policy-makers also assumed that interactive design processes could, when employed at an early stage of policy-making, explicate interdependencies among planning issues at different scales, facilitate discussions and agreements on these and in this way help to avoid conflict, delay and costs at later stages (Ovink and Wierenga, 2009).

These approaches were strongly promoted by the national government. In 2008, several ministries, including the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research and the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (the names of these ministries have been changed since then), emphasized the importance of regional design as an approach to integrating spatial policies in complex, pluriform institutional settings (Projectgroep Visie Architectuur en Ruimtelijk Ontwerp, 2008). The ministry responsible for spatial planning, currently called the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment, played an important role. For instance, it took the initiative in publishing a series of books called “Design and Politics” (Blank et al., 2009, Boeijenga et al., 2013, Boelens et al., 2010, Hajer et al., 2010, Ovink and Wierenga, 2009). The aim of these broadly distributed and heavily subsidized publications was to stimulate reflection on a large number of experiments carried out throughout the country. Ministerial support also went to specific design projects, one of them being the South Wing Studio.

4.1.2 The multiple performance of design

Although regional design has become increasingly important in the Netherlands, its use in and impact on planning processes are not yet fully understood. Whereas many regional design initiatives referred to multiple planning issues simultaneously, it remained unclear whether and, if so, how design-led approaches have influenced negotiations and decision-making on the empirical foundation, the underlying political principles or the ideas about territories that planning strategies incorporate. Under what conditions regional design has contributed to agreements on these issues (and the way they relate to each other), and therefore to institutional capacity-building, is also less understood.

One of the ways to consider these aspects of a planning strategy is according to Mastop and Faludi (1997) (Faludi and Korthals Altes, 1994) the examination of *performance*, a particular evaluation approach that has moved away from the classic means—ends scheme which only makes sense dealing with specific and well-defined operational policy or policy problem (Mastop and Faludi, 1997). The regional design

exercises which have drawn so much attention over the last few years were not simply meant to be implemented but to serve as signposts for subsequent decisions either on the level of actors (who is doing what with whom) or actions (what is to be done, when and how). In this sense, we have borrowed the performance approach from Mastop and Faludi who were seeking an evaluation approach which would match the nature of strategic spatial planning.

From a performance perspective, it is important to look at the effects of one of the fundamental characteristics of design, namely spatial representation. Authors such as Dühr (2006), Faludi (1996), Kunzmann (1996), Neuman (1996), Neuman (1998), Neuman (2010), Van Duinen (2004), (Van Duinen, 2013) and Zonneveld (2008) acknowledge that spatial representations (e.g. planning images, plans and maps) are a powerful medium in decision-making processes at the macro-scale and in complex organizational settings. These authors agree that images are open for multiple interpretations and thus act as "institution builders", as Neuman (1996, p.293) calls them. Images, in the perception of these authors, enhance the imaginative power of spatial planning and, by indicating territorial boundaries, constitute power structures and may produce agreement but also conflict.

Observing how spatial representations are used in spatial planning processes, some authors (Förster, 2009, Zonneveld, 2005a, Zonneveld, 2005b) have stressed that the objectives of their use are often mixed. The few authors who have empirically investigated the performance of design-based approaches in negotiation processes at higher levels (Carton and Enserink, 2006, De Jonge, 2009) came to similar conclusions: representations are used to indicate physical change, as well as to influence the organization of planning processes, the position and decisions of key actors in these process, and the deliberation of political norms and values. In a performance-based evaluation, the emphasis is on the latter.

4.1.3 The discursive dimension of planning concepts and design

In the context of regions with a high level of functional integration, strong interdependencies between places and elaborate informal governance arrangements, decision-making is a collaborative process of social construction that is intended to establish shared frameworks (Faludi, 2010, Healey, 2004). Regional design in such a context contributes to processes of framing: "selecting, organizing, interpreting, and making sense of a complex reality to provide guideposts for knowing, analyzing, persuading, and acting" (Rein and Schön, 1993).

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In order to clarify the performance of regional design and spatial representations in processes of frame reflection, we relate design to the notion of planning concepts. According to Zonneveld and Verwest (2005), planning concepts describe the way that planning actors frame the spatial development and/or spatial structure of an area or locality. Davoudi (2003) has noted that planning concepts have two important dimensions. The *analytical* dimension seeks to explain spatial structures by providing a hypothesis on their formation. Such a hypothesis is derived from and supported by knowledge and information on the way that unplanned and unintended individual actions affect spatial development. The concept polycentrism, for example, provides the hypothesis that several equally ranking cities within a region tend to employ horizontal forms of cooperation. In their *normative* dimension planning, concepts are a metaphor for desirable spatial structures and are used as a guiding principle to achieve policy goals. The concept polycentrism, for example, is often used to promote cooperation among cities within regions, enabling them from a governance perspective to become less pluricentric.

When spatial representations are used in creating arguments (or in reflexive processes of learning and advocacy), one of their main purposes is to restructure the relations among the analytical and the normative dimension of planning concepts, thus linking scientific knowledge to political and ethical deliberation (Flyvbjerg, 2004). In this sense, there is a strong connection between how spatial representations function in the context of planning concepts and how textual expressions function in the context of discourse as "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 and Versteeg, 2005, p.175). Spatial representations within a third, *discursive* dimension of planning concepts assist in knowledge co-production by (1) integrating analytical knowledge and (2) allocating *meaning* in politics and policy-making. Both types of representations can be investigated as *argumentations* in policy discourse.

Fischer (1995) categorizes four interrelated logics of policy argumentations on the basis of the level at which policies are discussed: (1) social choice, discussing normative core principles of policies; (2) societal vindication, discussing the compatibility of the policy with accepted political values and societal norms; (3) situational validation, discussing the relevance of a policy in the light of an analytically observable problem and (4) analytical verification, discussing the effectiveness of policies (summary based on Mathur et al. (2003), terminology adapted by authors). We applied this distinction in our case study to examine the purposes for which spatial representations were used by planning actors in different stages of design processes and whether logics of argumentations changed. The above framework is summarized in Figure 4.1.

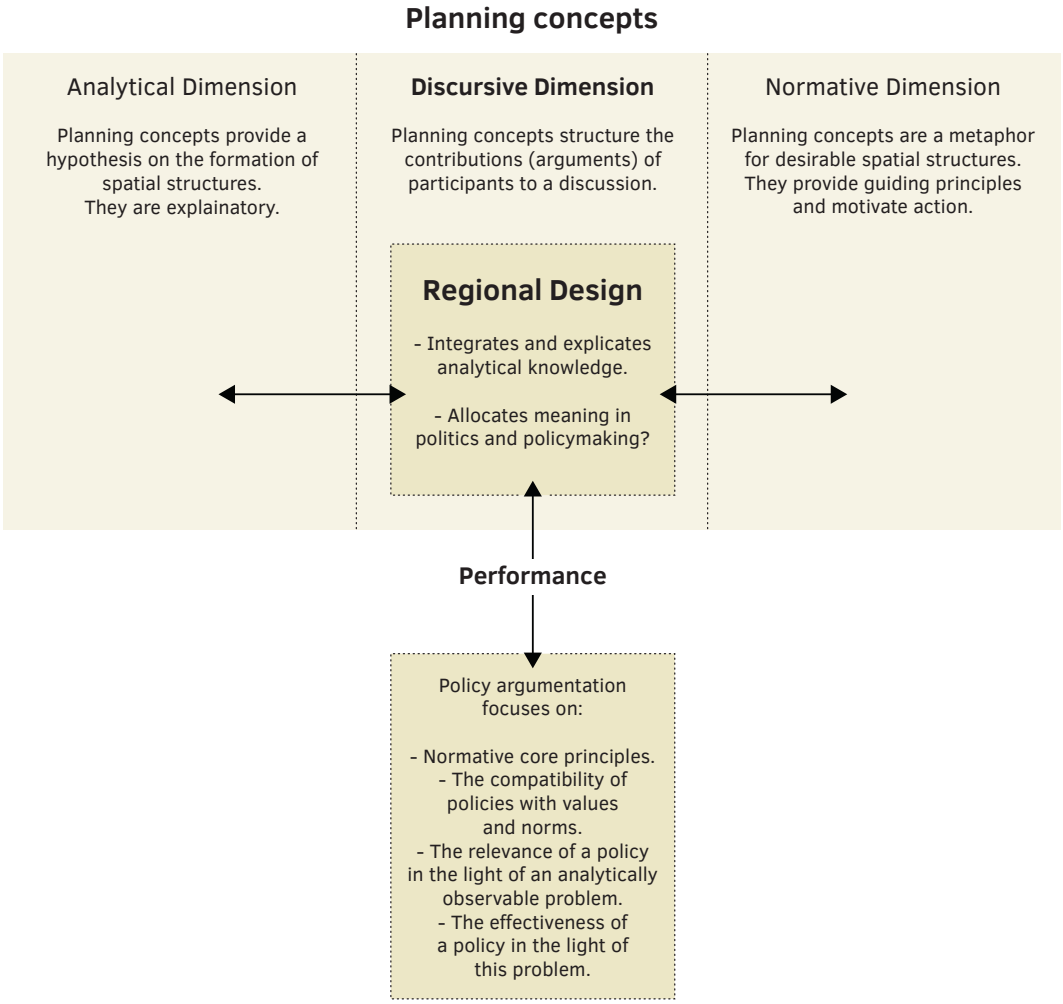

FIG. 4.1 Regional design in the context of planning concepts.

4.1.4 Unravelling the story of the South Wing Studio

The theoretical framework set out above was employed in a longitudinal single-case study to explore the multiple performance of regional design in a context of fragmented governance. For this purpose, (1) spatial representations produced in design processes were evaluated by their references to dimensions of the planning

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concepts discussed above, and (2) how different spatial representations were used in policy argumentations was assessed. The case study's proposition—namely that regional design does, in the context of planning, perform in multiple ways—was explored by (3) analysing changing logics of policy argumentations.

The research was on a regional design process carried out by a design studio concerned about spatial development in the southern part of the Dutch Randstad region and funded by a governance arrangement among local, provincial and national planning authorities between 2005 and 2007. The case was considered appropriate, since when the studio was established, it was deliberately and explicitly associated with several planning processes simultaneously. Another reason to choose this case was the wide availability of documentation and information. The studio was obliged by its brief to intensively communicate with policy-makers throughout its existence. This obligation has resulted in a rich and transparent documentation of decision-making processes. In-depth information could also be obtained since one of the authors was a member of the South Wing Studio throughout its existence (2005 – 2007). We have to emphasize that it was not the original intent of this observer to conduct the sort of research presented in this paper.

The case is, more specifically, concerned with one of the several design processes that were carried out by the studio. This specific process was chosen since it was closely related to a more formal planning process, quite unlike the other design projects in which the studio was involved. This allowed the identification of a distinct set of stakeholders in the process together with an empirically based assessment of the design project in question.

Several techniques and data sources were used in the various stages of the case study. To underpin the general proposition of the exploratory research, practitioners' expectations about the regional design-led approach were identified through interviews with key actors in the arrangements. Respondents stemmed from different participating organizations. Questions were semi-structured, covering two main topics, that is, the initiative for the South Wing Studio (motivation, formation) and the approach taken by the studio (description and expectation). In addition, documents referring to the initiative (such as discussion notes, the studio's tender and briefs, and the studio's working programme) were reviewed on the expected performance of the design work of the studio.

To distinguish types of spatial representations, the scope of (or in more simple terms, the key to) consecutively produced representations was analysed. The allocation of representations to dimensions of planning concepts was underpinned by a review of design methods that were applied in the production of these representations. Further

insights were obtained through the analysis of textual descriptions in workbooks published by the studio and archive material that was made available for the research. The analysis of the use of spatial representations in policy argumentations was informed by the observations made by one of the authors of this paper, who was a member of the studio. Other information sources—namely archival data (correspondence with commissioners, presentations), an ex post evaluation of the studio's work and the results of interviews—were used to calibrate observations.

The performance of the regional design was analysed by reviewing publicly available policy documents that contain references to the design approach under investigation. Documentary evidence on changes in the logic of policy argumentations was deducted from changing policy objectives, organizations authoring documents, the status and audience of publications and degrees of formality of policies.

The remaining part of the paper is structured as follows. The following section discusses the establishment of the studio. Sections 3 and 4 are about one of the key projects in which the studio became involved—the *Stedenbaan* project, which was originally conceived as an infrastructure project but evolved into a transit-oriented development project. Section 3 is about this fundamental switch. Section 4 is about the complex governance issues that resulted from this more integrated approach towards transport and urban development. The concluding section (Section 5) returns to the conceptual framework discussed above.

4.2 South Wing Studio

4.2.1 The immediate cause: The emergence of the urban network concept

Zuidvleugel, literally South Wing, is the name given to the densely populated 60-by-40-kilometre area in the province of South Holland. The South Wing area has 3.5 million inhabitants and a labour force of about 1.5 million, making it one of Europe's most densely populated conurbations. These high densities are not concentrated in one centre, but are spread out across the two major cities of The Hague and Rotterdam and many smaller cities and municipalities. According to several authors

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(Dijkink et al., 2001, Salet, 2006, Salet and Woltjer, 2009), the polycentric structure of this part of the Randstad Holland can at least partially be related to a high degree of organizational and governance complexity which results in rather weakly coordinated urban development.

In the early 2000s, the South Wing of the Randstad became conceptualized as one of the *Stedelijke Netwerken* (urban networks) in the Netherlands, a spatial concept which implies a desired level of spatial and organizational integration. Its introduction by the national government came after a long period in planning when the main Dutch cities were perceived as relatively autonomous entities which should develop along the lines of a compact city model. Seen from this perspective, the idea that groups of cities could form networks tied together by functional relations, physical infrastructure and connected government was rather innovative (Zonneveld and Verwest, 2005).

As is often the case, a new spatial concept such as urban networks is rather fuzzy in its content. This applies to both its empirical basis and how the concept is expected to perform in relation to concrete decision-making. Since its introduction, some have been concerned about the discursive dimension of the network concept (or: its usefulness in discursive planning practices), especially its organizing capacity in terms of stronger, more integrated regional governance. According to the director of the Department of Spatial Planning and Transport in the province of South Holland, the new concept—referred to as *Netwerkstad Zuidvleugel* (Network City South Wing) in official planning documents—was in need of refinement to effectively stimulate cooperation within the area. When he assumed office in 2002, his opinion was that the planning concept could not yet serve as a framework to support operational decision-making as it was not well understood. In his view, the South Wing was suffering from an abundance of plans, strategies and fierce competition between local planning actors and municipalities (Actor 1, province of South Holland).

Convinced that regional spatial planning in this context requires an improved understanding of the spatial scope and scale of the concept Network City South Wing he started to lobby for *vrije denkruimte* (free thinking space). His hope was that an institution that is independent from the daily political routine and given the time to reflect would help the province as well as other planning actors to develop a regional frame of reference for decision-making. He identified three tasks to be assigned to what was later called *Atelier Zuidvleugel* (South Wing Studio: “the studio” from here on): (1) generate insight into spatial development that steers and raises the profile of regional territorial management; (2) specifically integrate the knowledge of the different planning sectors within the provincial organization about spatial development and (3) use this knowledge to design plausible futures for the South Wing region (Actor 1, province of South Holland).

His initiative was supported by the provincial executive and the provincial council (see Needham (2007) about competences). There were two contextual developments that were supportive for the claim that a regional approach towards spatial planning would become more important in the future. The first one was a general trend towards the decentralization of planning tasks promoted by several consecutive Dutch governments and emphasized in an authoritative report of the Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy (Hajer and Zonneveld, 2000, NSCGP, 1999). The second trend was formed by the fundamental revision of the Spatial Planning Act which assigned a much clearer and proactive role for each of the three levels of administration, including the province (Needham, 2005, Spaans, 2006). A senior official in South Holland, looking back upon the first ideas about a design studio concluded: The Studio was intended to take a role in the transformation of the organisational structure of the province. It was asked to position the province in respect to other parties in regional spatial planning" (Actor 2, province of South Holland).

A second institution involved in setting up the studio was the South Wing Administrative Platform or *Bestuurlijk Platform Zuidvleugel* (BPZ). The BPZ was founded in 2000 to improve the coordination of urban development in the area. The members of the BPZ include the city regions in the South Wing, a number of other regional cooperation bodies, the municipalities of The Hague and Rotterdam and, most prominently, the province of South Holland. The financial and administrative resources of BPZ itself are minimal. It derives its organizational capacity predominantly from the will of its political representatives to cooperate and its success in securing national approval for projects and their funding (Dijkink et al., 2001).

The BPZ, the obvious prime protagonist of a network South Wing approach, was expected to embrace the initiative for the studio. However, right from the beginning of discussions about the formation of the studio, the partnership showed ambivalence. On the one hand, the studio was welcomed because it seemed to complement the aims of the BPZ itself (Actor 3, South Wing Studio). On the other hand, the studio was perceived to belong to the province and raised suspicion that it might enable the province to become a more powerful competitor for spatial planning tasks at the regional level. The director of the small office of the BPZ stated: "From my position at the BPZ I participate in the programming of the studio, but furthermore I don't feel that I am an owner" (Provincie Zuid-Holland, 2007, p.38, authors's translation). The Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (VROM), which more or less introduced the urban network concept, embraced the initiative. The ministry was interested in supporting the diffusion of a network approach at lower levels of government (Actor 1, province of South Holland). The different aims, interests and perceptions associated with the initiative

resulted in a long preparation phase. After two years of discussions and negotiations among parties, the studio was finally set up in 2005 as an independent platform. The province of South Holland, the municipalities of The Hague and Rotterdam, the BPZ, the ministry of VROM and, at a later stage, two national knowledge networks (Transumo and Habiforum) lent their formal support to the studio. Although the province of South Holland paid the lion's share of the costs (90% of a total of €2 million), it wanted to keep its distance. The studio was led by an external urban design firm, its staff was recruited externally and it was supervised by a programme council in which all formal participants were represented.

4.2.2 The studio in practice

Informal notes on early discussions among the participating parties (Provincie Zuid-Holland, 2004a, Provincie Zuid-Holland, 2004b) show that from the beginning the studio was intentionally placed in the context of regional governance. Participants agreed on the governance issues that the studio was expected to address: (1) too few linkages between the many plans made for the area; (2) too little experience of and knowledge about design at the regional scale and the application of the concept network city and (3) too little attention to long-term planning objectives in plans (Atelier Zuidvleugel, 2005). This shared problem perception demonstrates that the studio was instructed not only to promote the application of a network city approach at lower levels of government, but also to consciously include a multitude of local initiatives that together can serve as a "breeding ground" to make the network concept applicable and operational (Atelier Zuidvleugel, 2006b, p.4).

Instructions about the scope of the work also emphasized policy integration. In the tender to external design firms, it was stated that work should relate to ongoing policy processes (only one of these was specified; see Section 3). Beyond this guideline, there was very little information on the policy issues that the studio was expected to address. The work programme, which was approved by the programme council in 2006, was written by the studio itself (Atelier Zuidvleugel, 2006b). It was based on a review of policy documents from which three policy issues were extracted: (1) the integration of land-use and transport policies; (2) the position of peri-urban areas in regional urban strategies and (3) the functional integration of economic and social activities.

There was more concern about the way the studio would work. At an early stage of the initiative, the studio was characterized as a "catalyst" (Provincie Zuid-Holland, 2004a).In a later stage, this term was specified. The studio was expected

to fulfil three functions, as a discovery site (*Vindplaats*), a podium and a laboratory (Provincie Zuid-Holland, 2004b). As a discovery site, the expectation was that the studio would build up a body of knowledge and, more importantly, to infuse ongoing policy debates with this knowledge in order to move from tacit (individual) knowledge to explicit (shared) knowledge. In its function as a podium, the studio was expected, above all, to communicate through workshops and debates with experts, professionals and policy-makers. The laboratory—equated with design—was considered to be the most important function of the studio. However, notions of what an "appropriate" design method is and to what products design processes should lead remained rather vague. So the studio had to find its own way—and not without some difficulties, as will be discussed below.

As the analysis above shows, regional design in the case of the studio was perceived as a discursive practice. Spatial representations of the plausible future of the South Wing were expected—in the words of Carton and Enserink (2006, p. 166) to "assist the movement of arguments, serve as a supportive medium for sharing or distributing information and persuade actors." While the spatial scope of design projects (what to design) was only loosely described, it was clearly indicated that design processes (how to design) were to associate analytical knowledge to the interests and priorities of the planning actors involved. A critical distance, the studio's position at arm's length from day-to-day policy-making, was also carefully constructed.

The independence of the studio (its distance from the formal planning apparatus) was, however, relative. If we confront the studio practice with the content of Figure 4.1 and the preceding section, this means that the activity space of the studio was clearly demarcated in terms of the normative dimension of planning concepts as well as the sort of policy argumentations which the studio could address. The Network City concept, in spite of its fuzziness, provided guidance on the core principles of policies as well as accepted political values and societal aims. Spatial representations were to reflect on the effect and validity of policies in this framework. The hope was that reflection on both, analytical knowledge and the normative agendas of the many stakeholders in the area, would lead to agreement, i.e. an enlargement of institutional (organizational) capacity for more strongly coordinated urban development. We will come back to this in the concluding section. We will now discuss a concrete project of the studio—the *Stedenbaan* project—in order to shed light on the performance of the studio's regional design efforts.

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4.3 Stedenbaan: First stage

4.3.1 The birth of the Stedenbaan project

In November 2002, the Dutch national government announced its intention to develop a new national spatial strategy, which would replace the 1988 Fourth Report on Spatial Planning. Among the issues to be addressed by the upcoming *Nota Ruimte* (National Spatial Strategy) was the improvement of public transport at the sub-regional level. Evidence provided by the Ministry of Transport has shown that growth in travel demand overwhelmingly takes place at this level. According to promoted ideas about decentralization, the cooperating bodies of the four main city regions of the Randstad as well as the (larger) Randstad wings were asked to propose measures to meet these demands.

The BPZ responded swiftly by proposing the *Stedenbaan* (City Line) project in the same year. The main objective of this project was initially to improve public transport service by increasing the frequency of trains on the three oldest rail lines within the South Wing: the lines between Leiden and Dordrecht, The Hague and Gouda, and Rotterdam and Gouda (Figure 4.2). In 2003, the province of South Holland proposed enlarging the scope of the *Stedenbaan* project by including a spatial dimension. The idea was that better public transport services would provide a strong stimulus for spatial development around stations, reducing the need for new sites for urban development elsewhere. At the same time, higher urban densities around stations would increase the use of trains, thereby making it more attractive for transport companies to invest in higher quality services. This approach became known as the *Dubbele Benuttingsstrategie* (Dual Utilization Strategy) (Platform Zuidvleugel, 2003).

In 2004, the national government included the project in the draft National Spatial Strategy and asked the various public administrations in the South Wing to substantiate its added value (Ministeries van VROM et al., 2004). This implies that there were implicit doubts about the feasibility and effectiveness of the project as well as the necessity of the national government's participation. The dominant perception within the department of Infrastructure and Water Management was that the project was just a vehicle to acquire government funding for investment in the rail infrastructure (Faling et al., 2006). In a memorandum (Ministeries van V&W and VROM, 2004, p.58) , the BPZ was asked to refute this by quantifying the potential mutual relationships between transport and spatial development.

Meanwhile, the BPZ had invited the Dutch national railway company (NS) to become a partner in the project. The NS, although traditionally not engaged in spatial development strategies, proved to be open to negotiations. In the spring of 2005, on the basis of calculations and forecasts of travel demand (Onderwater and Holwerda, 2005), the NS indicated that a higher frequency of trains on the *Stedenbaan* lines would be feasible if a substantial number of new houses and offices in the South Wing (amounting to about 35% of the housing and 60% of the office space requirements projected for 2020) were built in the direct vicinity of *Stedenbaan* stations.

FIG. 4.2 Stedenbaan: rail lines and stations.

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4.3.2 The studio's first involvement: Analytical verification

Stedenbaan as a project had thus already started when the studio was established in 2005 (Bestuurlijk Platform Zuidvleugel, 2005). Under the umbrella of the BPZ, two committees, led by politicians from the larger municipalities and the province, were installed to take the project further. BPZ also set up a small organization for the daily management of the project. This organization, the *Stedenbaan* Steering Group, became the first commissioner of a design project given to the studio. The commission was called *Ruimtelijke Verkenning Stedenbaan* (*Stedenbaan* Spatial Inventory) and was placed in the context of the negotiations with the central government and NS mentioned above. The studio was asked to underpin the effectiveness of the spatial dimension of the project. The question posed to the studio was whether the increase in density required for an upgrade of the train service could be achieved; more specifically (as indicated by the NS) whether it is possible to build 40,000 houses and 1.2 million square metres of office space within the areas influenced by the *Stedenbaan* stations, given the fact that they are already largely built up (Stuurgroep Stedenbaan, 2005).

This commission raised a few eyebrows. Transport planners were quite sceptical about the compatibility of transport and land-use policies. Spatial planners from the province feared that the approach taken by the studio would not match very well with their way of working and might possibly even compete. Quite surprisingly—the studio was above all expected to work for the BPZ—was the fear within the management of the BPZ itself that the findings of the studio could undermine the political agreement reached between the city regions within the South Wing and the national government about the distribution of new houses across the area. In order to avoid conflict among its members, the BPZ indicated that the housing figures the studio had calculated had to be general and allocated across the South Wing as had been earlier agreed (Actor 3, South Wing Studio). So in terms of policy argumentation, the studio had to restrict itself to analytical verification (discussing the effectiveness of policies) and not even touch upon situational validation (discussing the relevance of a policy in the light of a problem) let alone societal vindication (discussing the compatibility of the policy with accepted political values and societal aims) and social choice (discussing core principles of policies). When it comes to the terminology developed for the studio, the laboratory function was, therefore, quite narrowly defined.

In a first attempt to respond to the commission, the South Wing Studio engaged in a search for analytical evidence. On the basis of an inventory of existing land uses and several calculations, the studio concluded that the potential for densification around the *Stedenbaan* stations was high, even higher than that required by NS.

This evidence was summarized in a spatial representation that classified areas around stations in terms of their potential for densification (Atelier Zuidvleugel, 2006a, Chapter 2.2 for a description). Communicating the results to the city regions brought a dormant conflict to the foreground. A number of municipalities involved in the *Stedenbaan* project were not part of the statutory cooperation bodies formed around The Hague and Rotterdam such as the municipalities in the Dordrecht area. So their political weight within the BPZ partnership was less than the municipalities who were able to lean on their powerful cooperation bodies. What these "weaker" municipalities did was to use the *Stedenbaan* project as an opportunity to strengthen their importance in the regional policy network of the South Wing. They did this by objecting to the conclusions of the studio. In their view, the outcome of the work of the studio did not reflect their (sometimes higher) ambitions for densification and a more equal spread of dense living environments across the South Wing. This forced the studio to change course and address the densification issue from a normative point of view. The studio started to analyse the intentions of all municipalities regarding the future development of station areas, making use of the *Nieuwe Kaart van Nederland* (New Map of the Netherlands), showing all politically accepted future land- use plans in the country. The plans for the 42 *Stedenbaan* station areas were reproduced on postcards (Figure 4.3), which were sent to policy-makers in the 22 municipalities involved, asking them to confirm these plans or to redraw the postcard and enter into a discussion of their views.

This eventually resulted in the second spatial representation by the studio: a map (Figure 4.4). This map showed in outline the areas that municipalities had allocated for new urban land uses as well as the planned renewal of existing urban areas over the next 20 years (Atelier Zuidvleugel, 2006c) (Atelier Zuidvleugel, 2006b). In geographical terms, this narrowed down the earlier defined influence areas around the *Stedenbaan* stations, defined by average walking and cycling distances. At the same time, the representation abstracted from all sorts of detail assembled in the database of the studio which might interfere with the sensitive negotiations between the BPZ, national government and the NS which were taking place simultaneously.

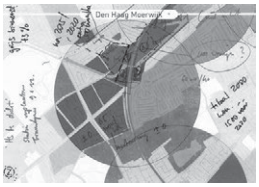
Although the representation was shaped by an effort to integrate the different perspectives of the *Stedenbaan* project and the studio obviously aimed to proceed with caution, it initially met with opposition. At the management level of the BPZ, it raised the fear that the design proposal was still too detailed and would, therefore, stimulate all sorts of conflicts especially regarding the distribution of houses across the South Wing area. However, after initial irritations positive responses gradually gained the upper hand. It became clear that the work of the studio, specifically a next estimation of future densities based on municipal land-use plans, was instrumental in achieving an agreement between BPZ and NS: both organizations officially expressed

their will to cooperate and agreed that spatial and transport development in the *Stedenbaan* area were mutually connected (Gedeputeerde Staten van Zuid-Holland et al., 2006). In March 2006, this was laid down in a declaration of intent, which was followed up in December 2007 by a declaration of implementation (Provincie Zuid-Holland et al., 2007). The agreement—which still stands at the time of writing—is that if the BPZ can guarantee the realization of up to 40,000 new dwellings and 1.2 million square metres of new office space in station areas by 2020, the NS will increase the frequency of services on at least one of the *Stedenbaan* lines from four to six trains per hour.

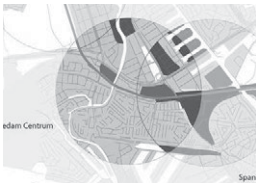
In addition to this tangible impact (summarized in Bestuurlijk Platform Zuidvleugel, 2006), the design proposal had another, unforeseen political effect: it had caught the attention of a range of politicians involved in the BPZ, who started to actively promote the *Stedenbaan* project as one of their own core strategies (Actor 1, province of South Holland). The main reason for this to happen was that the design proposal produced by the studio gave the impression that the *Stedenbaan* project was already well on its way: the inventory undertaken by the studio showed that for the vast majority of station areas, development plans were already drawn up. Although most municipal land-use plans were not developed in conjunction with the *Stedenbaan* project, the spatial representation rendered a certain level of institutional capacity, i.e. a capability to move beyond mere analytical verification.

1.03 Hillegom

3.03 Leiden de Vink



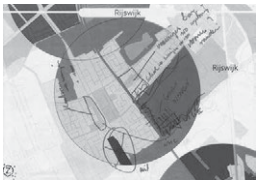
4.03 Den Haag Moerwijk



4.11 Schiedam Centrum

1.06 Voorhout

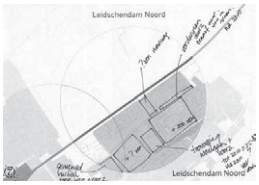
3.05 Voorschoten



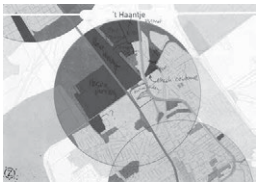
4.04 Rijswijk

4.12 Spangen

1.08 Leiden Noord / Merenwijk



3.06 Leidschendam Noord



4.05 't Haantje

5.01 Rotterdam Centraal

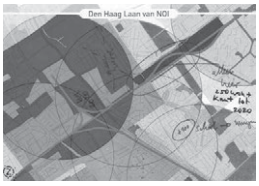
2.04 Sassenheim

3.07 Den Haag Mariahoeve

4.07 Delft

5.02 Rotterdam Blaak

3.01 Leiden

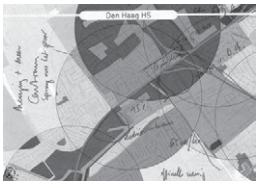


3.08 Den Haag Laan van NOI

4.09 Delft Zuid

5.03 Rotterdam Zuid

3.02 Leiden de Mors



4.01 Den Haag HS

4.10 Schiedam Kethel

5.05 Rotterdam Stadion

FIG. 4.3 Reproduction of municipal plans on postcards (selection).

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FIG. 4.4 Spatial representation assigning municipal land-use plans to the Stedenbaan project.

4.4 Stedenbaan: Next stage

4.4.1 Situational validation in the context of fragmented governance

The content of the next phase in the work of the studio aroused controversy. The *Stedenbaan* Steering Group (the official patron of the design project) opted for further detailing of the agreement between BPZ and NS through the setting up of a model to monitor local land-use development and the selection of single station areas as pilot projects—again work on a predominantly analytical level. Simultaneously, experts and political decision-makers in the BPZ stressed the need for widening the partnership in the direction of property developers and other market parties. The results of a research project commissioned by BPZ (Mattemaker and Brouwer, 2005) indicated the need for a stronger differentiation between urban environments along the *Stedenbaan* lines to correspond to future market demands.

During the first stage of the *Stedenbaan* project, the design work of the studio was driven by a clear problem definition, aim and organizational setting, whereas in the second stage of the process, the studio became more strongly concerned with the fragmented nature of decision-making in the context of regional governance. Communication—the podium function—has brought a multitude of planning actors to the foreground, each with different and sometimes conflicting objectives. In this situation, the studio made use of its relative independence. It chose, against the wishes of the steering group, to enter into a discussion about its prime *raison d'être*: reflecting on the need for regionally coordinated spatial development. This was strongly supported by senior officials of the province of South Holland, the main initiator and funding institute.

In the following stage of the design process, the studio consequently undertook efforts to shift arguments from being primarily concerned with analytical verification (Are policies effective?) to situational validation (Are the defined policy goals relevant to the problem?) (Mathur et al., 2003). The latter applied to *Stedenbaan*: "Is densification the right and only strategy given the objectives of regional authorities and partnerships?" Normative entries to this debate were available in abundance. Most prominently, the BPZ itself had promised to respond to the requests of the national government (Ministeries van VROM et al., 2005) and sought to explain how the *Stedenbaan* project could contribute to solving the main structural problems of the South Wing: a lack of economic vitality, social cohesion, accessibility and high quality housing and living environments and being threatened by unsustainable spatial development and the loss of "authentic" landscapes (Adviescommissie Zuidvleugel, 2000).

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In order to change the logic of argumentation, the spatial representations were reframed. The core map, which was originally intended to show the potential for densification in individual station areas, was placed in the context of regional development:

... the *Stedenbaan* project provides in its area of influence the largest coherent transformation zone within South Holland for the coming 20 years and is thus a strong instrument for the development of the South Wing being a part of the Randstad. (Atelier Zuidvleugel, 2006d, p.9)

Outcomes of earlier calculations were also given a new meaning. As mentioned above, the studio had concluded that the potential for densification in station areas exceeded the future densities required by the NS. This evidence was used to suggest that there is sufficient space and need for strategic regional planning. The initial prime arguments for regional coordination were: (1) station areas along the *Stedenbaan* line differ substantially from each other and (2) their transformation requires a consideration of market demands.

4.4.2 A new design proposal

In order to translate these arguments into a design proposal, the studio made use of an analytical model that has become widely known in the Netherlands in recent years: the Node-Place Model developed by the University of Amsterdam (Bertolini, 2008). The model was used to explore different scenarios for regional development: (1) the development of dense urban areas around all public transport stops, reflecting an overall densification strategy; (2) the development of diverse and complementary urban environments and (3) a sustainable approach: open landscapes are excluded from densification and new development is not likely to increase private transportation. These three scenarios were evaluated via multi-criteria analysis and visualized through a series of maps (Balz and Schrijnen, 2009). The final conclusion that the sequence of spatial representations rendered was that uncoordinated development in station areas leads to an overproduction of dense urban living and working environments within the South Wing.

In September 2006, the results of the Spatial Inventory *Stedenbaan* were published in an edition of 1000 books and distributed among a large network of planning professionals (Atelier Zuidvleugel, 2006a). Until November 2007, when the studio reached the end of its foreseen term of 2 years and was dismantled, they were frequently discussed, specifically among policy-makers.

While the influence of the first phase of the design process can be clearly traced by references in policy documents as we have seen in the previous section, the performance of this second phase is less easy to identify. If we just look at written material there is only one document—albeit an important one—in which the BPZ explicitly made use of the work done by the studio (Bestuurlijk Platform Zuidvleugel, 2007). This document is entirely about ambitions for spatial development in the area of influence around *Stedenbaan* stations. In this note, the differentiation of land use around these stations on the regional level is declared to be one of the core objectives of the entire *Stedenbaan* project. However, the BPZ placed the responsibility for the realization of this ambition on the city regions. This has nothing to do with unwillingness on the part of the BPZ but with its competences as an informal platform. So the follow-up was scaled down from the level of the South Wing to lower levels of scale, specifically the city regions of The Hague and Rotterdam, which have the formal means to guide spatial development within their administrative boundaries.

At the national level, we find the clearest indication of acceptance of the work done by the studio. In the 2008 statutory Structural Vision Randstad 2040 (Ministerie van VROM, 2008), the *Stedenbaan* project was regarded as the "best case" for the integration of trans- port and land-use development in the Netherlands. This labelling has undeniably contributed to the growing reputation of the project outside of South Wing. Since 2008, similar strategies were employed in several other Dutch regions (Provincie Noord-Holland and Vereniging Deltametropool, 2013). The project also gained attention in a range of (academic) publications and presentations with an international audience. In 2012, the BPZ enlarged the scale of the *Stedenbaan* project. Under the new heading "*StedenbaanPlus*", the partnership announced that it would include not only the earlier defined public transport lines but also all the main public transport in the South Wing.

4.5 Conclusions

We have seen a rise in the importance of regional design in the Netherlands in recent years, as claimed above. Despite high expectations, for many design trajectories, the results were rejected or drastically changed during consecutive stages of decision-making. In summarizing theoretical notions of spatial representations, we have shown that their use is not limited to the indication of physical change but also to debates about sharing normative principles, responsibilities and resources for

planning tasks among planning actors. In our view, this aspect is under-represented in the evaluation of Dutch regional design experiments and the purpose of this paper is to contribute to a better understanding of the performance of regional design in the context of regional governance.

To examine this multiple performance, we have related regional design to a discursive dimension of planning concepts. We assumed that spatial representations are used in processes of frame reflection by (1) integrating and explicating analytical *knowledge* and (2) allocating *meaning* in politics and policy-making. To investigate the explanatory, strategic and tactical use of spatial representations in the context of fragmented regional governance, we observed who had used types of spatial representations and for which purposes (for which logic of argumentation) in a concrete case: the *Stedenbaan* project. In this final section, we respond to our main research question: Did regional design (the reflection on planning concepts) contribute to the change of logics of argumentations, and if so, how? While analysing the *Stedenbaan* case along the lines of our theoretical framework, two stages of the design process came to the foreground. The first was concerned with analytical verification. Spatial representations referred to a single and simple hypothesis (high densities of houses and work spaces are more amenable to public transport operation and use). The evidence that was introduced was used to promote the making of a more efficient public transport system. The second stage was concerned with situational validation. Its purpose was to discuss how land-use development in station areas can help solve the problems that the national government highlighted when introducing the network city concept. Spatial representations referred to several interrelated hypotheses and several conflicting goals, most prominently the achievement of high densities versus a balanced regional market for houses and work space. By using the changing logics of policy argumentations as a measure to evaluate the performance of regional design, the work of the studio has undeniable contributed to a change of the level at which the initial *Stedenbaan* project was discussed. When *Stedenbaan* started, the project was predominantly perceived as only a transport project: an improved service on a set of public transport lines. The project is now consistently regarded as an integral transit-oriented development project on a regional scale.

In our analysis, we have also observed how governance arrangements responded to argumentations introduced by changing the scales and scope of spatial representations. Although the BPZ is an identifiable client (it has a small office and a postal address), it cannot be regarded as a clear-cut actor. In fact it is a multi-actor as well as a multi-level agency through which its members seek to speak with one voice. We have observed that the spatial representations that were introduced in stages of the design process related to the formation of different coalitions within

the BPZ and among BPZ members and other actors around these. Representations introduced in the first phase helped to stabilize the partnership among BPZ and NS. In addressing this powerful partner, the BPZ indeed spoke with one voice. The formal agreement among these partners as well as the setting up of a monitor to follow the development of land uses (number of houses and amount of working space) in station areas (land-use plans in the proximity of stations) established a semi-formal "planning space" that still constitutes the backbone of the *Stedenbaan* strategy and was crucial in sustaining the *Stedenbaan* organization over a period of nearly 10 years. In the second phase, the studio, in response to its initial commission and calls by the national governments, touched upon coordination issues. Relating land-use development to future market demands informed the formulation of a shared ambition for diverse living and housing environments. While attempting to translate this ambition into spatial planning practices, the partnership fell apart along the fault lines of administrative levels and formal resources. Specifically the province, which claimed a position in the coordination of regional urban development, came to stand on its own. We, however, also argue that this stage in the design process induced the travel of ideas. We support this notion by the references made to the *Stedenbaan* strategy in national policy documents and the reputation that the strategy gained among a broader, partially international audience. This type of performance is, however, difficult to trace and we cannot attribute it to one of the distinct moments of the design process followed by the studio. We conclude, nevertheless, that the *Stedenbaan* project constituted an additional "planning space", albeit a discursive or very "soft" one (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2009b).

Taking notice of the two stages in the design process focused our attention on the spatial representation that was most influential in facilitating an upward shift in logics of argumentations. Responding to the critique of municipalities, the studio produced a policy image that represented future land-use plans. The political balance within a platform like the BPZ is easily disturbed. At the moment of making this representation, the studio could not reopen a discussion about the distribution of land uses across the five city regions in the South Wing. Figures were politically approved beforehand and, therefore, engraved in stone. Making use of our theoretical framework, the resulting representation introduced no evidence nor did it promote a normative, political principle. The spatial representation that turned out to be most decisive in the up-scaling of argumentations described the *Stedenbaan* project from the point of view of territorial management. As it gave the impression that the municipalities are willing to associate their plans with the *Stedenbaan* project, it represented organizational capacity. From the point of view of the province, this association was interpreted as capacity for coordination, whereas the BPZ interpreted it as capacity for implementation.

As we noted above, regional design in the context of the Netherlands is often expected to operationalize spatial planning (or the indicative frameworks that the different governments are obliged to introduce), that is, to indicate territories that match the institutional capacities of governance arrangements, and vice versa. In the case of the *Stedenbaan*, that proved to be a very delicate endeavour. Proceeding with extreme caution meant that the design process followed by the studio needed to be continuously able to respond to the sensitivities of institutions. Although the studio was equipped with relative independence, with the back-up of some "ambassadors" of a regional spatial planning approach, substantial financial means and the time to reflect, spatial representations were largely used to tactically confirm existing (and often hidden) territorial structures. To persistently perceive territoriality as a malleable aspect in design processes has, however, been decisive in facilitating change.

We have only a part of the story of the studio. For instance, it has undertaken other projects besides the *Stedenbaan* project (for a summary, see Atelier Zuidvleugel, 2008b). No other project has been carried out within a network of identifiable "clients" such as the BPZ, though. As a result, these other projects suffered greatly when the two main protagonists of the studio—a director and a vice-director within the administration of the province—moved to new jobs elsewhere. Their replacements were not immediately convinced of the added value of the studio formula (regional design at arm's length from day-to-day policy-making), and so there was no longer a channel through which the studio could reach administrative and political levels as easily as before. Quite a number of the studio's design products, which in themselves were interesting, sank into oblivion. The stability and quality of channels between design practice and policy-making seem to be crucial for the performance of design in a situation of complex network governance.