8 Conclusions

To design for the purpose of planning was not new when regional design emerged as a distinguished discipline in the 1980s in the Netherlands. On the contrary, to imagine solutions for particular areas and to discuss these for the purpose of planning has been a long-standing tradition that can be traced back to the emergence of urban planning in the early 20th century. However, when spatial planning emerged as a new, more collaborative and anticipatory planning approach in the last decades, expectations concerning performances of design in planning decision-making increased. Design came to be seen as a practice that not only improves the spatial and technical quality of plans, but also enhances planning innovation, clarifies political agendas, forges societal alliances and raises the efficiency of planning through timely consideration of conflicts that planning may cause in societal and political domains. Since the 1990s, regional design underwent a process of institutionalisation in Dutch national planning. The practice became repetitively used and was formally embedded in planning procedures.

Despite more varied expectations and institutionalisation, interrelations between regional design and spatial planning are not well understood. As a result, the performances of regional design are difficult to predict and consequently, often disappointing. Therefore, this research has sought to conceptualise interrelations between regional design and spatial planning. It aimed at an enhanced explanation and prediction of performances. The main research question was: how do the interrelations between regional design and spatial planning influence the performances of regional design? Answers to this question were sought through case-study research. During two consecutive rounds of exploration, two perspectives were taken. During a first in-depth case-study, key performances of regional design were analysed. During a second multiple case-studies analysis, the contextual determinants of these performances were investigated.

Detailed results of this dissertation are embodied in Chapter 3 to 7 of this publication. Below, these outcomes are summarised in order to form one coherent line of argument. Theoretical notions, which were considered during the research but were not mentioned in earlier publications of the chapters in the form of journal articles and book chapters, are added. The chapter also contains a critical reflection on the research approaches that were used. A dedicated section summarises the implications of findings for future research.

8.1 Key performances of regional design in the realm of spatial planning

There are multiple expectations concerning the performances of regional design in spatial-planning decision-making. Concepts explaining and predicting these expectations are however, incomplete. This research sought to build an analytical framework that corresponds to this knowledge gap. During a first in-depth case-study, the performances of regional design were investigated. The questions addressed were: what are key performances of regional design in the realm of spatial planning, and how can these be analysed? The answers to these questions are presented below. A first section summarises theoretical notions that were found to be the most relevant for explaining different performances. In a second section, the key performances that were identified during theory formation and case-study analysis, are listed. A final section is dedicated to additional results from empirical research. It lists outcomes that have influenced the second round of case-study exploration.

8.1.1 Facilitating attention to geographies in spatial planning

Prohibitive and restrictive land-use control, embodied in statutory planning frameworks and exercised by government, has long been the primary means of planning in the Netherlands and elsewhere. In the 1980s, when development started to agglomerate in regions with privileged positions in expanding economic networks, this form of planning came to stand under critique though (Klosterman, 1985, Sager, 2011, Waterhout et al., 2013). It was seen to "stifle entrepreneurial initiative, impede innovation, and impose unnecessary financial and administrative burdens on the economy" (Klosterman, 1985, p.2). A change in planning style set in, "a shift away from distributive policies, welfare considerations, and direct service provision towards more market-oriented and market-dependent approaches aimed at pursuing economic growth and competitive restructuring" (Waterhout et al. (2013, p.143) referring to Swyngedouw et al. (2002)). A higher appreciation of market forces unlocked planning reforms across Europe, leading to a range of approaches that were commonly called *spatial planning* (Albrechts et al., 2003, Allmendinger and Haughton, 2010, Faludi, 2010, Healey, 2006, Nadin, 2007, Needham, 1988, Schön, 2005, Waterhout, 2008). Spatial-planning approaches differ across countries with different planning systems, and cultures in decision-making (Commission of the

European Communities (CEC), 1997, Nadin and Stead, 2008, Waterhout, 2008). They also share characteristics: "Compared with previous regulatory land-use planning approaches, [spatial planning] is distinctive for: encouraging long-term strategic visions; providing the spatial dimension to improved integration across a range of sectoral plans and activity; supporting `balanced' approaches to sustainable development; and improving engagement with stakeholders and the public" (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2010, p.803).

Spatial planning is expected to pay particular attention to spatial development, in comparison to regulatory planning (Albrechts et al., 2003, Albrechts, 2004, Allmendinger and Haughton, 2009a, Allmendinger and Haughton, 2010, Faludi, 2010, Healey, 2004, Healey, 2006, Nadin, 2007, Needham, 1988, Schön, 2005, Tewdwr-Jones et al., 2010). In planning-theoretical terms, this recognition has caused a search for an increased understanding of how such attention is facilitated in spatial-planning decision-making. One important strand of investigation focuses on the use of geographic imagery. It brings to the foreground that spatial representations, in words and images, are meaningful and purposefully employed by plan actors to inform the behaviour of other, related actors (Davoudi, 2012, Davoudi and Strange, 2008, Dühr, 2003, Dühr, 2004, Dühr, 2006, Faludi, 1996, Graham and Healey, 1999, Jensen and Richardson, 2003, Neuman, 1996, Thierstein and Förster, 2008, Van Duinen, 2004, Förster, 2009). Based on writings on the utilisation of spatial representations in planning processes, three main logics can be distinguished (Dühr, 2004, Förster, 2009, Moll, 1991, Van Duinen, 2004). When representations have an *analytical logic*, a theory on or observation of spatial development is referred to; a spatial representation is associated with (invariable) scientific knowledge about material settings and practices. The *normative logic* of representations evolves against the background of political values and norms; representations portray desirable planning outcomes. In an *organisational logic* a representation shows a territory, wherein planning action unfolds.

Davoudi (2012, p.438), referring to Fischler (1995, p.23), notes that the term 'representation', "differs from a positivist understanding of visualisation as a communication system. It emphasises the interdependence between: 'the symbolic structure that frame what is being said, written and shown during planning processes and the political structures that frame interactions during those'." The recognition that spatial planning draws on shared spatial imageries has led to a second strand of investigation into how attention to spatial development is facilitated in spatial-planning decision-making. 'Framing' is a key concept here. A 'frame' is a "perspective from which an amorphous, ill-defined, problematic situation can be made sense of and acted on" (Rein and Schön, 1993, p.146). When geographies are used for the framing of policy argumentation, they reassert the "cognitive and normative

expectations of […] actors by shaping and promoting a common worldview as well as developing adequate solutions to sequencing problems, that is, the predictable ordering of various actions, policies, or processes over time" (Jessop, 2001). In planning literature, geographic frames are often termed spatial concepts (or planning concepts). These concepts are acknowledged to resemble discourse (Van Duinen, 2004), 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). Building upon existing notions on the use of concepts in spatial planning (Davoudi, 2003, Davoudi, 2012, Davoudi et al., 2018, Gualini and Majoor, 2007, Hagens, 2010, Healey, 2004, Markusen, 1999, Richardson and Jensen, 2003, Van Duinen, 2004, Zonneveld, 1991, Zonneveld, 1989, Zonneveld and Verwest, 2005), analysis has brought to the foreground that spatial concepts, when used as framing devices, have several dimensions. In an *analytical* dimension, a spatial concept explains spatial development by providing knowledge on how unplanned individual action affects development. In a *normative* dimension, a concept is a metaphor for desirable spatial structures and is also a guiding principle to achieve a policy goal. In an *organisational* dimension of concepts, prevailing territorial control is reflected. In conjunction, these dimensions allow for the composition of arguments on what, why and how to plan. They establish a fourth, *discursive dimension* in which spatial representations of regional design proposals, composed of corresponding logics, operate.

Among design scholars, there is broad agreement that design is an argumentative practice, oriented towards the improvement of the built environment (Hillier and Leaman, 1974, Rittel, 1987, Schön, 1988, Schön, 1983). Design also has a holistic orientation. It is an attempt at establishing a comprehensive understanding of spatial development, an explorative search for integral solutions that consider dependencies among parts. Designers "work with models as means of vicarious perception and manipulation. Sketches, cardboard models, diagrams and mathematical models, and the most flexible of them all, speech, serve as media to support the imagination" (Rittel, 1987, p.1). To argue for change, the designer imagines design solutions but simultaneously envisions the world around him or her. The latter is a process of abstraction that leads to the recognition of *types*: simplifications of real, material settings, sited between highly general, abstract categories and highly specific ones (Schön, 1988, Hillier and Leaman, 1974, Caliskan, 2012). Such simplification is instrumental in design: "By invoking a type, a designer can see how a possible design move might be matched or mismatched to a situation" (Schön, 1988, p.183). Conclusions drawn during iterative design processes can be twofold: the testing of solutions against abstract perceptions of real-world settings - the "design world" as Schön (1992, p.3) calls these perceptions - may lead to the modification of a design solution. It may also lead to a changing

appreciation of this "design world" (idem). When assuming that spatial concepts constitute such a 'spatial-planning world', interrelations between regional design and spatial planning come to the foreground.

8.1.2 Performances of regional design in a discursive dimension of planning concepts

The above notions on design, in combination with notions on how spatial development is considered in the realm of spatial planning (outlined in Table 8.1), have led to a first position concerning interrelations between regional design and spatial-planning frameworks. In this position, regional design as an argumentative practice, performs in a discursive dimension of spatial concepts. In order to identify ways how plans influence decision making, Faludi and Korthals Altes (1994, p.405) distinguish a 'technocratic' from a 'sociocratic' way of planning. In technocratic planning, government safeguards the public interest by means of a ready-made plan. In a sociocratic approach, the views of other actors are considered: "[a]uthorities are not the only ones called upon to act in the 'public interest' and not above other actors either. This leaves room for negotiations" (Faludi and Van der Valk, 1994, p.405). In a technocratic way of planning, the influence of plans is judged upon the 'conformance' between implemented planning decisions and the earlier onward determined plans. In a sociocratic way of planning, the 'performance' of plans is in the outcome of negotiation and deliberation: in agreement among actors, and the change of mind that the formation of such consent requires. When taking this definition of *performance* as a starting point, a set of key performances of regional design in the realm of spatial planning can be distinguished.

— **Regional design assists in the building of spatial-planning rationales.** A first general performance of regional design in the realm of spatial planning is in the building of spatial-planning rationales. Above, in Section 8.1.1, it was noted that spatial concepts incorporate analytical, normative and organisational notions. When regional design is seen to operate in a discursive dimension of spatial concepts, it assists in the structuring of these existing reservoirs of meaning, in the face of a particular spatial problem. Such structuring of knowledge, values and norms - the building of story lines and narratives - gains considerable attention in literature about regional design (Hajer et al., 2010, Van Dijk, 2011, Hajer et al., 2006). In the realm of spatial planning, structuring corresponds to its objective "to articulate a more coherent spatial logic for land use regulation, resource protection, and investments in regeneration and infrastructure" (Albrechts et al., 2003, p.113). In both realms, persuasive logics are associated with learning and the willingness of actors to become engaged in planning.

— **Regional design challenges or refines spatial-planning rationales.** As highlighted above, design theorists argue that design - the testing of solutions against simplified abstractions of the built environment - may be a process of elaboration or of discovery. When assuming that design practice is framed by spatial concepts, the practice may be used to refine these concepts through deducing solutions from an institutionalised repertoire of meanings. Conversely, a hypothetical or imagined design solution may help the designer to uncover new aspects of the built environment. Design practice is then inductive: it is used to challenge or enrich prevailing spatial concepts and the array of rationales that these incorporate.

— **Key performances stem from matches and mismatches in analytical, political and organisational dimensions.** A more detailed set of performances can be presumed through the distinction of logics of spatial representations and dimensions of spatial concepts. According to these, design may be a form of analytical reasoning (referring to the analytical foundation of concepts), a form of political action (referring to the normative planning agendas that concepts imply), or a form of organisational reasoning (referring to forms of territorial action and control concepts suggest). In the introductory chapter of this thesis, it was noted that the expectations on the performances of regional design in the realm of spatial planning are varied: design is likewise expected to contribute to the spatial, technical quality of plans, the clarification of political options as well as enhanced territorial management. The analytical framework explains these different performances by the matches and mismatches that designs produce in the context of premediated perceptions of geographies that frame policy argumentation. Depending on these congruencies, design proposals refine or challenge the analytical foundation of spatial concepts, the normative agendas that they incorporate or the policy-making that they suggest for territories.

TABLE 8.1 Theoretical notions used to identify key performances of regional design in the realm of spatial planning

Design theory	
Design is an argumentative practice.	
– Design has a normative orientation towards change and improvement. – Design has a holistic orientation. It is concerned about wholes and interdependencies among parts. – In a context of uncertainty, design is exploratory. Instead of following a linear problem solution logics, argumentation evolves during iterations, repetitive rounds in which solutions are developed, comprehended, reflected upon and adapted. – Design follows a process of 'conjecture and refutation'. The building of argument involves creativity and ingenuity, luck, and also doubt.	(Caliskan, 2012, Cross, 2001, Hillier and Leaman, 1974, Lawson, 2009, Rittel, 1987, Schön, 1983, Schön, 1992, Schönwandt and Grunau, 2003, Cross, 2004, Van Aken, 2005).
Designers work with representation.	
– Designers work with representations of the built environment to support the imagination.	(Lawson, 2009, Rittel, 1987)
Abstract representations of the built environment are used to test design solutions.	
– To argue for change, the designer imagines design solutions but simultaneously imagines the world around him or her. The latter is a process of abstraction that leads to the recognition of *types*: simplifications of real, material settings, sited between highly general, abstract categories and highly specific ones. – Simplifications of real, material settings are used to test solutions. – Testing may lead to adaptations of solutions or to a changing appreciation of environments.	(Caliskan, 2012, Hillier and Leaman, 1974, Schön, 1988).
Planning theory	
Planning has a normative orientation.	
– Planning has a normative orientation. It seeks to sustain environmental resources, to distribute these in an even and fair way, to temper unintended external effects that stem from individual or group action, and to improve the information base for democratic decision making.	(Klosterman, 1985)
Spatial planning pays particular attention to spatial development.	
– Spatial planning is oriented towards the long-term, the integration of sectoral plans and activity, and the involvement of stakeholders in planning decision-making. – Compared to other (regulatory) planning approaches, spatial planning pays particular attention to spatial development.	(Albrechts et al., 2003, Albrechts, 2004, Allmendinger and Haughton, 2009a, Allmendinger and Haughton, 2010, Faludi, 2010, Healey, 2004, Healey, 2006, Nadin, 2007, Needham, 1988, Schön, 2005, Tewdwr-Jones et al., 2010).
Spatial representations are geographic imagery that is purposefully used by plan actors.	
– Spatial representations, in word and image, are socially constructed perceptions of the built environment. – Spatial representations are expressions of what different actors find important and what they are willing to neglect. – Spatial representations have agency, they are purposefully employed by plan actors to inform the behaviour of other, related actors. – Spatial representations draw on repertoires of existing symbols.	(Davoudi, 2012, Davoudi and Strange, 2008, Dühr, 2003, Dühr, 2004, Dühr, 2006, Faludi, 1996, Graham and Healey, 1999, Jensen and Richardson, 2003, Neuman, 1996, Thierstein and Förster, 2008, Van Duinen, 2004, Förster, 2009)

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TABLE 8.1 Theoretical notions used to identify key performances of regional design in the realm of spatial planning

The use of spatial representations has an analytical, normative and/or organisational logic.	
1) When representations have an analytical logic, they depict spatial development and are associated with (invariable) scientific knowledge about material spatial settings and practices. 2) When representations have a normative logic, they portray desirable planning outcomes and are associated with political values. 3) When representations have an organisational logic they show a territory and are associated with forms of territorial management.	(Dühr, 2004, Förster, 2009, Moll, 1991, Van Duinen, 2004).
Spatial concepts are institutionalised perceptions of geographies.	
– Spatial concepts are perceptions of geographies that are used for the purpose of planning. – A frame is "a perspective from which an amorphous, ill-defined, problematic situation can be made sense of and acted on" (Rein and Schön, 1993, p.146). Spatial concepts are geographic frames. – Spatial concepts resemble 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).'	(Davoudi, 2003, Davoudi, 2012, Davoudi et al., 2018, Gualini and Majoor, 2007, Hagens, 2010, Healey, 2004, Markusen, 1999, Richardson and Jensen, 2003, Van Duinen, 2004, Zonneveld, 1991, Zonneveld, 1989, Zonneveld and Verwest, 2005)
Spatial concepts are composed of an analytical, normative and an organisational dimension.	
1) In their analytical dimension spatial concepts provide a reservoir of analytical knowledge. 2) In their normative dimension spatial concepts incorporate a reservoir of political values. 3) In their organisational dimension concepts incorporate a reservoir of policy measures that can take effect in territories. – Through being composed of these dimensions, spatial concepts allow for the construction of spatial planning rationales.	(Davoudi, 2003, Markusen, 1999, Van der Valk, 2002, Van Duinen, 2004, Zonneveld, 1991)
Performance of plans is in their impact on decision-making.	
– The conformance of plans is in their effective implementation. – The performance of plans is in their impact on decision-making. Performances are in learning and/or a change of minds of actors.	(Faludi, 1987, Faludi, 2000, Faludi and Korthals Altes, 1994, Mastop and Faludi, 1997, Needham, 1988)

8.1.3   Additional results from case-study analysis

The initial in-depth case-study, presented in Chapter 3 and 4, drew on analysis of the South Wing Studio (*Atelier Zuidvleugel*), a regional-design practice that was conducted between 2005 and 2007 in the southern part of the Dutch Randstad region. The study investigated how the practice contributed to the formation of a regional transit-oriented development strategy for the area around the cities The Hague, Rotterdam, Gouda, and Leiden. The empirical analysis contributed to the formation of the analytical framework summarised above. It also generated results that shaped the second stage of the overall research, which investigated the influence of spatial-planning frameworks on performances of design. These additional results are briefly described below.

— **Pragmatic behaviour in regional design processes.** Empirical analysis revealed that pragmatic behaviour by plan actors strongly influenced the regional design process under investigation. The most influential spatial representations discussed the investigated regional transit-oriented development strategy from the point of view of territorial management. The broadly defined and various normative, political agendas of governance arrangements in the region gained considerably less attention. When they stood in the way of operationalising planning in particular areas, they were transformed to match managerial concerns.

— **A critical distance from the planning apparatus**. The regional-design practice under investigation was above all used to operationalise spatial planning; to indicate territories that match the institutional capacities of governance arrangements, and vice versa. This proved to be a very delicate endeavour. The design process followed by the studio needed to continuously respond to the sensitivities of actors. Considering these sensitivities during the design processes became decisive in facilitating change. The relative independence of the studio, its position at arm's length from daily policy making, greatly supported the endeavour.

— **The importance of dedicated regional design actors.** The independence of the studio allowed for the mediation between the interests of actors. Analysis also brought to the foreground that the stability and quality of relations between actors in design practice and policy-making were crucial for the performance of design as well. The design project under investigation had identifiable 'clients' within its fragmented governance setting and enjoyed the support of main protagonists within the provincial organisation. Other projects by the studio that lacked such links to the more formal spatial-planning apparatus seemed to have performed less well in spatial-planning decision-making.

8.2 Aspects of spatial-planning frameworks that influence the performances of regional design

In design theory, design practice appears to be "a relatively simple set of operations carried out on highly complex structures, which are themselves simplified by 'theories' and modes of representation", as Hillier and Leaman (1974, p.4) note. These scholars argue that, if a design method is to be improved, a sophisticated understanding of these theories and modes is more important than an understanding of the practices themselves. The South Wing Studio case study led to a distinction of key performances of regional design in the realm of spatial planning. An important additional result of the study was the recognition that the planning context of regional design - in particular spatial concepts that frame spatial-planning decision-making - is a crucial determinant. Therefore, the ways these frameworks influence regional-design practice were investigated during a second multiple case-studies analysis. The questions addressed were: what aspects of spatial-planning frameworks influence the performances of regional design, and how can these aspects of spatial-planning frameworks be analysed? Below, theoretical notions that were found to be most relevant for answering these questions are summarised first. In the following sub- section, influential aspects of frameworks, deduced from theories and confirmed by case-study analysis, are presented. A third sub-section summarises additional results from this case-study. It lists theoretical concepts that gained relevance during empirical analysis but were not further explored as part of this thesis.

8.2.1 Regional design as a rule-building practice

As noted above, design is an argumentative practice. To argue for change, the designer imagines design solutions but simultaneously imagines the world around him or her. Simplifications of real, material settings, situated between highly general, abstract categories and highly specific ones are used to test imagined design solutions (Caliskan, 2012, Hillier and Leaman, 1974, Schön, 1988, Schön, 1992). Such testing leads to the recognition of matches and mismatches: the designer learns how well certain design solutions fit particular settings. Conclusions drawn from testing can be reflected in the modification of a design solution or in a changing appreciation of the "design world" (Schön, 1992, p.3). Another design product - one

that is often overseen in practice - is in the interdependencies between solutions and their perceived context. From the testing of solutions against types, rules are deducted: "As rules of law are derived from judicial precedents, […], so design rules are derived from types, and may be subjected to test and criticism by reference to them" (Schön, 1988, p.183).

Design scholars emphasise that design thrives on rich knowledge about a particular situation, constituting what Rittel (1987, p.5) calls 'epistemic freedom' (see also Caliskan, 2012). In the context of such freedom, design solutions are derived from the argumentation on how a design solution functions within its context but the argument is inevitably incomplete. The designer considers a broad body of knowledge from a variety of fields, decides upon paths to go, and leaves thereby others unexplored: "[T]here are no logical or epistemological constraints or rules which would prescribe which of the various meaningful steps to take next" (Rittel, 1987, p.5). Freedom facilitates creativity, "ingenuity, and luck" in design argumentation, as Caliskan (2012, p.279) argues, referring to Popper (1957, p.7). However, design scholars also note that overly abundant freedom produces doubt and that this, in turn, leads to a search for constraints that diminish available choices and thus, the responsibility for solutions that a designer holds (Cross, 2004). These notions imply that the abundance of choices built into premediated simplifications of material settings is an important condition of design. Such abundance of choices built into frameworks is also an issue in planning theory.

Performances of plans are defined as the impact that plans have on decision-making: in learning and a change of mind of actors, as was noted above. The related decision-centred evaluation approach is associated with a broader "argumentative turn" in planning theory and practice (Forester and Fischer, 1993, p.1). During this turn, plans came to be seen as tools that not fully determine planning output, but as temporary, malleable compromises between actors: a "drifting cloud" (Friedmann and Gross, 1965, p.39), or "a fleeting summary of current knowledge, expectations and goals" (Faludi and Korthals Altes, 1994, p.405). Planning approaches related to this turn - including collaborative, communicative and participative approaches, amongst others (e.g. Forester, 1980, Friedmann, 1969, Healey, 1997, Healey, 1999) - share a concern about the quality of decision-making, a reliance on an interpretative rather than a positivist premise, and a social constructionist perspective, in which "the social and political life under investigation is embedded in a web of social meanings produced and reproduced through discursive practices" (Fischer, 2007, p.101). All approaches embrace pluralism by recognising different world views that exist in societies. All acknowledge conflict that results from such diversity, and deduce a need for communication, collaboration and negotiation from this acknowledgement. All also recognise a need for 'framing' in policy

argumentation. Frames involve what is likewise called a 'field of choice' (Faludi and Korthals Altes, 1994, Friend and Jessop, 2013), 'a field of argument' (Dryzek, 1993, Fischer, 2007) or 'a field of positions' (Rittel, 1987). Such frames define core values and outline norms to allow for the consideration of competing arguments and the making of strategic choices, without letting arguments go astray (Dryzek, 1993).

Choices built into flexible frames are required in argumentative planning. More broadly, they are also an important determinant of planning approaches. As is the case in argumentative planning, a high degree of flexibility in planning guidance is positively associated with negotiation, collaboration and governance, as shown in distinctions between, for instance, 'indicative' and 'imperative' planning (Faludi and Korthals Altes, 1994), between 'development-led' and 'plan-led' planning' (Buitelaar et al., 2011, Munoz, 2010) and, more broadly, between planning approaches that provide for either 'discretion' or 'certainty' (Tewdwr-Jones, 1999). In the realm of spatial planning, the flexibility of planning frameworks is also associated with the particular attention which this planning approach pays to the geographies of regions and areas. In this realm, flexibility is required to facilitate a recognition of diverse spatial circumstances and the making of strategic locational choices.

Faludi (1987) and Needham (1988), theorised the emergence of spatial planning in the Netherlands early onward. They note that a form of planning that allocates planning resources to some areas while others are omitted, requires negotiable relations between what they call a 'spatial order' (autonomous spatial development, driven by social action) and 'spatial ordering' (intervening in spatial development). They argue that too definite relations would neglect the spatial and organisational particularities of local situations and cause conflict between actors. Allmendinger and Haughton (2010) investigated spatial planning in the context of a 'regional gap', characterised by only softly defined planning guidance. They observed that such flexibility contributes to the "tempering of national and local concerns" during the formation of strategies to address real problems in particular spatial situations 'on the ground' (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2010, p.807). They (and others with them) conclude that softness built into premediated territorial conceptions allows for their adaptation to distinct spatial circumstances (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2009b, Allmendinger et al., 2016, Brenner, 2004, Faludi, 2013, Hincks et al., 2017). That the softness – or ambiguity - of geographies plays a role in spatial planning is also recognised by scholars who investigate spatial concepts (Davoudi, 2003, Davoudi et al., 2018, Markusen, 1999). These scholars note that concepts have a more or less fuzzy analytical foundation - they rely on a select and detailed empirical evidence base or on a landscape of theories - and incorporate more or less clearly defined normative values - broad agendas or operational goals. Analysis shows that these attributes are transformed while concepts are employed by actors with

an interest in particular situations. Depending on evident spatial circumstances, political preferences and territorial interests, concepts are used as a descriptive and analytical tool or as a prescriptive and normative agenda (Davoudi, 2003). As the application of spatial-planning frameworks to particular situations are influenced by the flexibility of frameworks, the tailoring of concepts to particular situations is conditioned by their ambiguity.

8.2.2 Regional design as a form of discretion

Discretion is, in popular terms, "the art of suiting action to particular circumstances" (The Rt Hon Lord Scarman, 1981, p.103). It evolves in the context of predefined rules, and is concerned with "making choices between courses of action" in this context (Booth, 2007, p.131). Discretionary action is a search for "leeway in the interpretation of fact and the application of precedent to particular cases" (Booth, 2007, p.129). It aims at an improvement of generally applicable rules through a judgement of their implications for particular situations. Initial outcomes of this dissertation have shown that regional design assists in the building of spatial-planning rationales by either challenging or refining spatial concepts with imagined design proposals. The above mentioned theoretical notions on regional design as a rule-building practice, and the importance of choices for design, argumentative and strategic spatial planning, as well as the use of spatial concepts (outlined in Table 8.2) imply that regional-design practices resemble discretionary action: that practices, when used in the realm of spatial planning, seek to proactively qualify spatial-planning decisions by means of imagined, place-based solutions. The equation between regional design and discretionary action allows for the involvement of these notions in the detailing of interrelations between regional design and spatial planning. It brings a set of aspects of spatial-planning frameworks to the foreground as plausible determinants of the performances of regional design.

— **A given room for interpretation is a determinant of regional design.** Design scholars note that epistemic freedom, built into preconceived types of environments, matters for design argumentation. Planning scholars with an interest in decision making emphasise the flexibility of planning frameworks as an important determinant of both, collaboration and strategic spatial-planning decision-making. Spatial concepts involve a degree of ambiguity to allow for their interpretation 'on the ground.' In discretion, *room for interpretation* - the choices that premediated rules incorporate - is a central issue. Without these choices, discretionary action can, by definition, not evolve (Booth, 2007). On the grounds of these notions, it can first be argued that the choices built into premediated spatial concepts are an important

context for design. The empirical analysis in this thesis shows that in regional-design practice, such room for interpretations can be embodied in a variety of types of 'frames': it can sit in broadly defined institutionalised spatial concepts, with which designers are expected to work, or in the more detailed geographies that concrete regional design commissions pose. In whatever form room for interpretation is presented, it requires attention as a determinant of regional design performance.

— **Room for interpretation determines if regional design is pragmatic or evolves as a form of advocacy.** Choices for action built into rules are required for discretion. Their abundance determines how discretion evolves, as scholars who have investigated discretion in the realm of (spatial) planning have noted (e.g. Booth, 1996, Booth, 2007, Buitelaar and Sorel, 2010, Tewdwr-Jones, 1999). These scholars argue that discretionary action, when evolving in the context of multiple choices, likely leads to a refinement of rules. Conversely, such action likely leads to the challenging of rules when it evolves in the context of few choices. Design theorists argue that design - the testing of solutions against simplified abstractions of the built environment - may be a process of elaboration or of discovery. On the grounds of these notions, it can be assumed that the room for interpretation that designers are provided with, determines if design will likely be deductive - elaborating premediated geographies - or be inductive - discovering new or new features of geographies. In more fundamental terms, these notions imply that regional design, depending on premediated choices and constraints, either evolves as pragmatic behaviour or as a form of advocacy.

Empirical analysis of regional design practices in this thesis shows that expectations concerning their performances in spatial planning are various: design is seen to be an artistic practice that generates new, inspiring ideas and a practice that enhances the operationalisation of spatial planning. The above argument implies that these performances are influenced by a given room for interpretation built into spatial-planning frameworks, the ambiguity of spatial concepts in particular. The argument also implies that performances are mutually exclusive because a spatial logic cannot be challenged and refined at the same time.

— **Room for interpretation informs collaboration and governance in regional design.** It is common to describe governance arrangements as social bodies that involve intricate networks, composed of multiple and multi-level, horizontal and vertical relations among public, private, and civil actors (e.g. in Ansell, 2000, Booth, 2005, Hooghe and Marks, 2001, Jessop, 2004). Arrangements form temporary political entities, which continuously re-constitute themselves while demands for governing arise from above, below or beside (Ansell, 2000, Jessop, 2001, Jessop, 2004). The involvement of governance arrangements in spatial planning has different purposes.

Inclusion may follow a collaborative rationale; governance is then justified by a recognition and appreciation of plurality, and aspires good democratic decision-making (Healey, 2003, Innes and Booher, 2003). Another governance rationale is related to 'governing': the resolution of societal problems that occur in particular situations (Mayntz, 2004). In this more politically motivated involvement of actors, the recognition of distinct problems and the operationalisation of planning in the face of these problems play an important role. Mayntz (2004) notes that these two governance rationales co-exist in planning practice. However, other authors argue that the strategic selectivity, which is required for the recognition of problems in particular areas, is likely to produce conflict and thus may stand in the way of harmonious collaboration (Brenner, 2004, Friend and Jessop, 2013, Jessop, 2001). That the two governance rationales are not easy to combine is also recognised by scholars in discretion. These make a distinction between discretion by means of collaborative policy argumentation, and by means of more confrontational processes. They argue that the former process is likely to occur in the context of softly defined policy guidance where discretion is pragmatic. The latter process is likely to occur in the context of rigid law or regulation where discretion is a form of advocacy (Tewdwr-Jones, 1999, Booth, 2002, Booth, 2007).

Scholars who have elaborated on regional design, often appreciate its collaborative nature (Kempenaar, 2017, Van Dijk, 2011, De Jonge, 2009). Empirical analysis conducted for this thesis has shown that the employment of regional design in spatial-planning decision-making is indeed frequently motivated by the inclusion of multiple actors. The equivalence between regional design and discretionary action implies, however, that collaboration requires scrutiny. The notions above indicate that governance in regional-design practice differs depending on room for interpretation in premediated rules: collaborating actors are either united by broadly defined, shared perceptions of the built environment, or are separated by a more narrowly and therefore, more operationally defined perceptions. As is the case in governance practice, networked actor constellations in regional-design practice may be difficult to unravel. However, unravelling is required to identify possibly hidden political agendas, overly pragmatic behaviour, or unaccountable ways to influence decision-making procedures (see e.g. Allmendinger and Haughton, 2009a, Jessop, 2004). Such unravelling is also required to predict and assess the performances of regional design in the realm of cooperation.

— **Distances between actors with different roles in regional design qualify the performance of regional design in spatial-planning decision-making.** An equivalence between regional design and discretion not only leads to a distinction in the governance rationales of regional-design practices but also implies a need to distinguish roles in their conduction. In discretion, the ones who hold responsibility

for premediated rules, who seek to bend these rules, and who judge if such search has indeed built sufficient argument for rule-revision need to be separated, in order to guarantee accountability and legitimacy. One implication of a similar division of actors in regional design lies in the power that is attributed to the design commissioner: the actor who frames design tasks and, in this way, provides room for interpretation or epistemic freedom. By formulating problem definitions, policy agendas or design briefs, the commissioner predetermines the outcomes and performance. Room for interpretation in preconceived rules also determines the relations between commissioners and the 'authors' of design proposals – those who engage in the making of design proposals. In a pragmatic use of regional design both commissioners and authors, are united by shared spatial imaginaries. When design is used for advocacy, it will be more likely that these actors are divided.

An equivalence between regional design and discretion finally stresses a need for discernible judgement. In discretion, there is a distinction between discretionary action – the constitution of precedent, or the interpretation of rules on the ground – and discretionary control: the assessment whether discretionary action should lead to rule reform. For the qualification of discretion in organisational terms, a distance between those who compose a 'court of appeal' and those who seek exemption is essential. In regional-design practice, actors who judge whether a design proposal is a relevant interpretation of premediated spatial-planning rationales or a negligible incident need to be independent from both, commissioners and authors of design, to be able to come to objective conclusions.

Empirical analysis of regional practice here has shown that actor constellations in regional design have changed substantially over time. The practice was first used by professionals, to criticise Dutch national planning. It then turned into a governance-led and finally a government-led practice, with a highly pragmatic rationale. Distances between roles of actors gained critical remarks in Chapter 6 and 7. Changes in the organisational set-up, however, underscore that these organisational constellations around regional-design practice are an important aspect that influences the performances of regional design as a legitimate and accountable decision-making practice.

TABLE 8.2 Theoretical notions used to identify aspects of spatial-planning frameworks that influence regional design

Design theory	
Design involves rule-making.	
– During design processes simplifications of real, material settings are used to test design solutions. From of the testing of imagined solutions against abstract perceptions of the built environment, rules are deducted: "[a]s rules of law are derived from judicial precedents, (…), so design rules are derived from types, and may be subjected to test and criticism by reference to them" (Schön, 1988, p.183).	(Caliskan, 2012, Schön, 1988).
'Epistemic freedom' influences design practice.	
– Design argumentation thrives on epistemic freedom, constituted by rich knowledge about a particular situation. This freedom constitutes the creativity of design processes. – In the context of such freedom, design solutions are derived from argumentation on how a design solution functions within its context but argument is inevitably incomplete. – Overly abundant choices turn design into a practice of doubt. Doubt causes pragmatic behaviour: searches for acknowledged constraints that limit choices and release the designer from responsibility.	(Caliskan, 2012, Cross, 2004, Rittel, 1987).
Planning theory	
Choices built into 'frames' facilitate involvement in argumentative planning.	
– Argumentative planning relies on an interpretative premise, and a social constructionist perspective. – In argumentative planning different world views that exist in societies are acknowledged. A need for communication, and negotiation is deduced from this diversity. – A frame is "a perspective from which an amorphous, ill-defined, problematic situation can be made sense of and acted on" (Rein and Schön, 1993, p.146). Frames are required for the consideration of competing arguments in policy argumentation. – The amount of choices built into frames determines the planning-audience bandwidth for political consent and thus the quality of democratic decisions.	(Dryzek, 1993, Faludi, 1987, Faludi, 2000, Faludi and Korthals Altes, 1994, Fischer, 1995, Fischer, 2012, Forester, 1980, Forester and Fischer, 1993, Friedmann, 1969, Hajer, 1995, Healey, 1997, Healey, 1999, Innes and Booher, 2003, Mastop and Faludi, 1997, Needham, 1988, Rein and Schön, 1993, Throgmorton, 1993, Throgmorton, 2003, Tewdwr-Jones, 1999)
The flexibility of planning frameworks is an important determinant of planning.	
– Planning frameworks incorporate degrees of flexibility. – A high degree of flexibility is positively associated with negotiation, collaboration and governance. – A low degree of flexibility is positively associated with certainty and the predictability of planning outcomes.	(Buitelaar et al., 2011, Faludi and Korthals Altes, 1994, Munoz, 2010, Tewdwr-Jones, 1999)
Choices built into spatial-planning frameworks allow for the recognition of spatial diversity.	
– The flexibility of spatial-planning frameworks facilitates a recognition of spatial diversity. – The amount of choices built into frameworks influences strategic spatial selectivity: the making of strategic locational choices. – A high degree of flexibility ('softness') is positively associated with the responsiveness of planning to real problems 'on the ground'.	(Allmendinger and Haughton, 2009b, Allmendinger and Haughton, 2010, Allmendinger et al., 2016, Brenner, 2004, Faludi, 1987, Faludi, 2013, Hincks et al., 2017, Needham, 1988).

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TABLE 8.2 Theoretical notions used to identify aspects of spatial-planning frameworks that influence regional design	
Spatial concepts have different degrees of ambiguity.	
– Spatial concepts have a more or less fuzzy analytical foundation. – Spatial concepts incorporate more or less clearly defined values(broad agendas or operational goals). – Spatial concepts embody more or less soft territories and forms of territorial control.	(Davoudi, 2006, Markusen, 1999, Davoudi et al., 2018).
Discretion seeks to qualify rules through assessing their implications for particular situations.	
– Discretion is a form of decision-making that evolves in the context of predefined rules. In this context, discretionary action is a search for "leeway in the interpretation of fact and the application of precedent to particular cases" (Booth, 2007, p.129). – Discretion is "the art of suiting action to particular circumstances" (The Rt Hon Lord Scarman (1981, p.103). It seeks to qualify rules through assessing their implications for particular situations. – Discretion requires flexibility; room for interpretation in rules provides for the possibility of making a choice between courses of action. – 'Discretion has organisational/institutional implications, as it defines "who decides and with what degrees of freedom, about the way in which the system legitimates the power to act" (Booth 1996, 132).	(e.g. Booth, 1996, Booth, 2007, Buitelaar and Sorel, 2010, Tewdwr-Jones, 1999)

8.2.3 Additional results from case-study analysis

The multiple case-study analysis presented in Chapter 5, 6, and 7 has investigated aspects of spatial-planning frameworks that influence performances of regional design and how these aspects can be analysed. As the initial in-depth case-study analysis, research has, besides contributing to the analytical framework that was summarised above, delivered some additional results. Below, theoretical concepts that gained relevance but were not fully explored during analysis are briefly discussed.

— **Creativity in regional design:** Design scholars note that design in the context of abundant epistemic freedom or a broad room for interpretation produces doubt that leads to a search for constraints limiting the number of available choices: "What the designer knows, believes, fears, desires enters his reasoning at every step of the process, affects his use of epistemic freedom. He will - of course - commit himself to those positions which matches his beliefs, convictions, preferences, and values, unless he is persuaded or convinced by someone else or his own insight" (Rittel, 1987, p.6). Empirical analyses revealed pragmatic behaviour in regional-design practices, in particular, when these evolve in the context of ambiguous spatial-planning frameworks and complex governance settings. In planning literature, overly pragmatic behaviour in such settings is associated with a wish to sustain existing political agendas and power structures (see for instance Allmendinger

and Haughton, 2009a). In the above presentation of main results of this thesis, it was therefore argued that design practice needs to separate actors with different roles. Such separation likely also influences creativity. What design professionals have called a "free thinking space" (Atelier Zuidvleugel, 2005, p.7) may affect the emergence of innovative planning solutions.

— **'Assemblage-thinking' in regional design:** The analytical framework presented here relies on the assumption that regional design includes the building of spatial-planning rationales. How such rationales evolve receives attention by a number of planning scholars. Observation of urbanism approaches reminded them of 'assemblage thinking,' where planning is the outcome of rather spontaneous association of occurring action on the ground with generally applicable frameworks (Allmendinger et al., 2016, Brenner et al., 2011, Cochrane, 2012, Jones, 2009, Massey, 2011, Allmendinger and Haughton, 2009a). Empirical analyses here has focused on the matches and mismatches that regional design proposals produce in the context of spatial-planning frameworks. The analyses indicate that resulting decisions were often not based upon carefully constructed rationales but indeed the product of spontaneous, at times difficult to objectively explain reflexivity, or 'assemblage thinking'.

— **Meta-governance in regional design:** Meta-governance, as defined by Jessop (2004), is in attempts to control planning decisions not by means of deliberating substantial issues but by controlling decision-making procedures. Such control involves measures that "deploy […] organizational intelligence and information", "provide rules for participation", "organize negotiations" and install a "court of appeal" (idem, p. 13). The engagement of the Dutch national government in regional-design practice investigated in this thesis appears to have been motivated by such attempts at times. It can therefore be concluded that the concept of 'meta-governance' is relevant for a deeper understanding of regional design in the realm of spatial planning.

— **Values and norms of regional design professionals:** In discretionary practice, multiple forms of discretionary control exist. Booth (2007, p.136) distinguishes controls that are "external to the administration and the political decision-making process" (including elections in voting, judicial review, and public participation) and "internal controls" (including negotiation within administrations). By referring to Adler and Asquith (1981, p.13), he also points at controls that are "exercised through professional affiliation" and "by reference to 'esoteric professional knowledge" (idem, p. 136). He notes that professional organisations, when they engage in discretionary control, claim to have special expertise, and distinguish themselves through a "code of conduct", ethical principles and core values

(idem, p. 139). Empirical analysis of regional-design practice in Dutch national planning has identified such core values and norms of regional design professionals, for instance in their continuing referencing to 'spatial quality' and their consistent use of imagery. It can be assumed that the self-conception of the professional community has informed regional-design practice and its performances.

8.3 Reflection on the research approach

8.3.1 Remarks on the assessment of the use of regional design in Dutch national planning

This research has used regional-design practices and Dutch national spatial-planning frameworks as empirical material for the building of an analytical framework. Next to conclusions concerning this framework, Chapter 5, 6 and 7 include critical discussions on the way how regional design was used in Dutch national planning over time. A set of remarks are important for an understanding of this criticism.

One critical stance taken in this thesis addresses the rather one-sided use of regional design in Dutch national planning in the period between the mid- and late 2000s; it was argued that institutionalisation has strongly favoured pragmatic use back then. It is important to note that during analysis there was an account of also less pragmatic engagement of the national government with regional design: besides using practices for the implementation of its agenda and projects, the government has also taken initiatives to stimulate use more broadly. In 2004, the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (*Ministerie van Volkshuisvesting, Ruimtelijke Ordening en Milieubeheer*, VROM) established a chair at the University of Utrecht, to elaborate a critical review of (Dutch) spatial planning. In 2009, it set up a chair entitled 'Design and Politics' at the Delft University of Technology, to critically assess interrelations between the two issues. Under the same banner – Design and Politics – members of the ministry edited a series of books, in collaboration with a host of external co-editors (for the first volume, see Ovink and Wierenga, 2009). In 2012, the stimulation of 'top sectors', a selection of Dutch internationally operating economic sectors, became an important objective of Dutch national planning. Regional design, as part of a creative industries cluster, was casted as a typical Dutch export product that was to be advertised among possible commissioners

worldwide, during a range of Dutch trade missions for instance. The involvement of Dutch planners and designers in the US initiative Rebuild by Design, concerned about the aftermath of the hurricane Sandy along the USA North-Eastern coast, can be seen as a precedent of this engagement (Ovink and Boeijenga, 2018). These efforts can be perceived as pragmatic too, seen their relation with the Dutch 'top sector' policy. However, they also contributed to the resolution of pressing societal problems elsewhere.

For an understanding of criticism, it is also important to reiterate that the analysis here focused on regional-design practices that were mainly concerned with urbanisation. As described in Chapter 2, this thematic focus was chosen to guarantee internal consistency between the investigated cases. As a result, little attention was given to regional-design practices that addressed other fields in Dutch national planning since the 1980s, notably the development of open (rural and natural) landscapes and water systems. A range of practices related to these fields was briefly reviewed in the empirical analysis of the organisational setting of regional design in Dutch national planning in Chapter 7. However, the concern was only with actor constellations, therefore the interrelations between practices and Dutch national planning over time cannot be identified.

Observation allows one to assume that regional-design-led approaches to decision-making in the different thematic fields of Dutch national planning share certain characteristics. As regional-design practices with their main concern for urbanisation, practices focused on other development have gained prominence in the wider Dutch spatial planning discourse. The Stork Plan (*Plan Ooivaar*), the winning entry to the 1st Eo-Wijers competition in 1986, has for instance contributed to the debate not only on the integration of agriculture, ecological, and landscape development but also on a new, more adaptive planning approach (De Jonge, 2009). As design practices dedicated to urbanisation, practices in other fields – in particular water systems – underwent a process of institutionalisation in national planning since the mid-2000s. Institutionalisation is reflected in, for example, the Dutch national Delta Programme, which was initiated in 2010, and the 2006-2019 national programme Space for the River (*Ruimte voor de Rivier*) (Rijke et al., 2012). Both programmes accommodated design-led approaches to planning decision-making via dedicated organisations and procedures. Programmes facilitated a series of design studios and procedures to assess the design quality of projects that fell under their purview. Experts on design practices addressing themes other than urbanisation confirm the importance of Dutch planning frameworks for an explanation of the performance of design (see e.g. Meyer, 2009, Sijmons, 2002). Some also share criticism on an overly pragmatic use of design in Dutch national planning since the mid-2000s (see e.g. Luiten, 2011).

However, besides commonalities between regional design practices in the different thematic fields of Dutch national planning there are also apparent differences. Design practices concerning landscape and water systems usually rely less strongly on knowledge from the disciplines associated with urban studies (emphasising regions as a "setting for social practice" or a structure that accommodates "socio-economic functional relations", as Paasi (2000, p. 5) argues), and more strongly on knowledge from the discipline of landscape architecture. This latter knowledge emphasises a morphological perception of regions; one where they are perceived as an "object" or a "living organism" (Paasi, 2000, p. 4). Another important difference is in the values and norms to which design with a concern about landscape and water systems refer. Outline observations indicate that the ones that were used in the realm of Dutch national planning since the 1980s shared a comparably higher appreciation of 'spatial quality' and – naturally – more explicitly embraced the very urgent agenda of water safety in the Netherlands. In organisational terms they appear to have addressed other national government sectors, different implementation instruments, and/or particular planning decisions.

Some of the regional-design practices that this dissertation discussed in-depth were explicitly dedicated to transcending the thematic fields or sector boundaries that Dutch national planning usually employs (the Delta Metropolis design discussed in Chapter 6 among others). Some spatial concepts adopted in Dutch national plans had similar purposes (the conceptualisation of three layers, capturing characteristics of soil and natural landscapes, main infrastructure, and urban occupation, adopted in the 2002 Fifth Report on Spatial Planning is an example here). However – seeing the importance that the framework developed here gives to contextual conditions and the above-sketched notions on differences in the context of regional design practices – the criticism of the way in which regional design was used in Dutch national planning over time, pursued in this dissertation, cannot be transferred across the thematic fields that national planning implied.

For an understanding of criticism, it is finally important to note that empirical analysis focused on a particular time period. It has brought to the foreground that the use of regional design has shifted in accordance to shifts in Dutch national planning, in particular changes in the collaborative rationale of spatial-planning frameworks. At the time of concluding this dissertation, a new Dutch national plan is scheduled to be published in 2019 (Ministerie van I&M, 2017). As was the case earlier, this plan may influence the use of regional design in planning decision-making and may make some of the criticism expressed here obsolete. Overall, it is important to note that criticism is meant to, above all, inspire reflection on the role and position of regional design in spatial planning.

Remarks on the analytical framework

Results of this dissertation are summarised above, in Section 8.1 and 8.2. In conjunction, these results contributed to the formation of an analytical framework that identifies interrelations between regional design and spatial planning and predicts performances of regional design in this realm on these grounds. A set of critical remarks on this frameworks are mentioned below.

Firstly, it is important to emphasise that the framework employs a particular social-constructionist perspective on both, design and spatial planning. Schön (1988, p.183) argues that "the idea of design worlds is inconsistent with an objectivist point of view, according to which things are what they are independent of our ways of seeing them. […] From a constructionist perspective, the seeming objectivity of a consensual design world is not a given but an achievement, a product of the work of communicative inquiry." Similar notions concern decisions that are the outcome of policy argumentation in the realm of planning. The term 'region' did not gain a clear-cut definition during research, because also these are seen to be mental constructions: the outcome of negotiated disciplinary, managerial and political stances (Jones and Paasi, 2013, Paasi, 2000, Paasi, 2010, Paasi, 2012, Amin, 2004). Through its social- constructionist perspective, the framework does neglect particular design knowledge that stems from studying the tangible form of the built environment.

The analytical framework developed throughout this research is meant to identify matches as well as mismatches between spatial rationales in design proposals and spatial concepts. It distinguishes (1) spatial concepts by their analytical, normative and organisational dimensions and their degree of ambiguity, and (2) spatial representations by their analytical, normative and organisational logics. Second, it is important to note that it was at times difficult to maintain the framework during empirical research, as analyses relied on a set of qualitative methodologies that know little precedent. Images of regional design proposals and spatial plans were important objects of analysis. Titles and keys of maps were used as codes in consecutive text analyses. However, this approach is not fully validated. Dühr (2005) notes that there is no benchmark to analyse policy text and graphic expression in conjunction. The method used to investigate the 'ambiguity' of spatial concepts is also not supported through earlier application. As described in Chapter 6, ambiguity was deduced from the amount and relative degree of detail in analytical evidence, normative goals, and policy measures. As these issues are interwoven in planning rationales, it was at times difficult to unravel them. Last but not least, it was challenging to identify performances which are, as was noted above, in a changing mind of actors. A variety of ways to detect such change is elaborated in planning

literature. Change is seen to become apparent through, for instance, shifting levels in policy argumentation (Fischer, 1995, Fischer, 2007), the way how information moves from one policy making arena to another and triggers learning (e.g. Nadin and Stead, 2008, Colomb, 2007), in different language, rhetoric and drama (Throgmorton, 1993, Throgmorton, 2003), the formation of discourse coalitions, and discourse institutionalisation (Hajer, 1995, Hajer, 2002, Hajer, 2006). Although each of these performances is assigned with dedicated methodological prescriptions, in practice, it remains difficult to trace them, as they often remain implicit, and are spread over time. A lack of proven guidelines for assessing changing ideas about geographies in performance research posed a particular challenge to this dissertation.

A final critical remark concerns the interrelations between regional design and spatial-planning frameworks. As was noted earlier, regional design has a holistic orientation; it considers multiple interdependencies between different parts of the built environment. Spatial planning strives for comprehensiveness: the integration of sectoral plans and activities as well as the consideration of interests of multiple actors. In reality, interrelations between distinct regional-design practices and spatial-planning frameworks are therefore composed of a multitude of matches and mismatches between regional-design and spatial-planning rationales. Thus, practices trigger a multitude of performances at the same time. The analytical framework presented here relies on categories that order these rationales and performances by their analytical, normative and organisational concerns. While this rough ordering serves the main aim of this thesis - a comprehensive understanding of interrelations between regional design and spatial-planning frameworks and a positioning of regional design in the realm of spatial planning on these grounds – it neglects single matches and mismatches that regional design proposals produce, and therefore, more detailed performances.

8.4 Directions for further research

Regional-design practices differ in their spatial scope and scale, have different relations to premediated spatial-planning frameworks and involve various actors with various roles. Efforts to understand them as one unified approach that performs in the realm of spatial planning seem vain. However, this research has attempted to do so, by detailing and stabilising propositions concerning interrelations between regional-design practice and spatial-planning frameworks. The outcome of

exploratory case-study research is more detailed and stable propositions. Results presented in Chapter 4 to 7, and summarised in Section 8.1 and 8.2 above, point at issues that require further research. Below some of these issues are highlighted to form broader research directions.

This thesis argues that regional design efforts, when used in the realm of spatial planning, share characteristics. They commonly emerge from discretionary attempts to mediate between generally accepted and applicable spatial-planning rules and strategies to solve problems in particular local situations. The analytical model that was developed for the analysis of such mediation is based on a combination of planning and design theory. A search for similarities among theories has resulted in the recognition that the built environment itself is their most important common denominator. The model recognises spatial concepts as institutionalised geographic ideas or spatial imaginaries that hold reservoirs of meaning. Regional design assembles a selection of notions from these reservoirs for a distinct planning purpose in a particular area or place. Both the use of concepts and the use of design, have agency in constructing perceptions of the built environment. This notion calls first for a more sophisticated understanding of **how perceptions of material settings transform as they are used**: how abstract spatial concepts turn into detailed designs and vice versa.

To understand how geographic perceptions transform requires a deeper understanding of who is involved in such transformation. The model presented here argues that design is a form of discretionary action. This stance enhances attention to the institutional settings of regional design. Allmendinger and Haughton (2010, p.807) argue that the "tempering of national and local concerns […] high-lights the importance of professional discretion and the role of the planning policy community as a force for change within modern governance, working alongside and as an integral part of diverse policy networks and coalitions, working from existing institutional and governance practices and cultures to create new ones." Scholars in discretion also highlight the importance of professional organisations in rule-building. They note that these organisations influence decisions through the values and norms they pursue. On the grounds of these notions and findings of this thesis, it can be proposed that **the role of the regional-design community in spatial-planning decision-making** requires deeper understanding. As noted above, there is a rich body of professional knowledge and expertise in the Dutch professional field of regional design. This practical knowledge presents an underused reservoir for such understanding.

In Dutch planning, there is a tradition of finding political consent, which has led to a broad variety of argumentative and collaborative planning practices, such as regional design. A rich Dutch design experience found an expression in multiple organisations

that exercise, support or control regional design. Repeated practices also led to conventions in the use of regional design. For example, it is broadly understood that a design proposal is not necessarily made to be implemented; that it may as well just portrait a brief moment in decision-making, meant to perpetuate reflection solely. Regional design is used also in other (European) regions, in the realm of spatial planning. As planning systems and cultures differ in countries, so may the design institutions. A comparative perspective on these institutions may lead to a deeper understanding of not just the regional-design practices themselves, but also of **how spatial development finds attention in spatial planning elsewhere.**

Faludi (2013, p.1312) notes that "territory can no longer be understood as a fixed entity enveloping all major aspects of social and political life but rather as the object of negotiation and compromise, open to multiple and contested interpretations. […] Spatial planning is then about inserting imaginative visions into the on-going reconstruction of the spatial fabric of life, including the plurality of territories which this implies." An implicit proposition developed here is that flexibility, in the form of ambiguous geographies, influences the creativity of planning approaches and thus, their ability to transgress preconceived, seemingly fixed perceptions of spatial organisation. The proposition is inspired by design theory where design is described as a process of elaboration and of discovery. Although many planning efforts involve expectation on creative solutions and innovation on the ground, **ways how to accommodate creativity in planning approaches** gains only marginal attention in planning theory and research. The proposition calls for improved methodological approaches to asses degrees of ambiguity of geographies or, more broadly, the flexibility (or softness) of spatial planning and governance frameworks. The proposition also calls for a broader integration of planning and design theory.