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ID 1659 | FLANDERS´ SPATIAL (POLICY) PLANNING IN THE MAKING: POTENTIAL AND LIMITS TO COLLABORATION AS COLLECTIVE LEARNING

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ABSTRACT: Planning has to adapt itself to changing challenges and circumstances. But also innovative ideas and new ambitions from within can lead to changes of an established planning system. In Flanders (one of three Belgian regions), the administration of spatial planning is currently developing a new concept, format and approach: spatial ‘structure planning’ will be followed-up by ‘policy planning’. To foster flexibility, a new legal frame and instruments redirect planning towards combining a long-term strategic vision with mid-term realization-focused policy-frames. The regional government hopes to approve the new planning system by the end of 2017. Worth mentioning here is the shift from hierarchical relationships

between planning levels to partnership-relationships based on equivalence. Collaboration at and between governance levels, policy domains, and relevant actors is central to this. The regional planning agency will provide rather guidance than norms. Since that kind of collaboration is not yet a structural part of the actual planning culture, this new direction is at odds with practices until now, and needs critical support. This paper has the ambition to assess the actual situation in Flanders and to contribute to theoretical positions on flexible planning within constellations of uncertainty, while developing concepts on collaboration and reframing concepts on participation. In terms of method, the recent 'White Paper' – approved November 2016 - about this 'policy planning', is scrutinized in the light of research findings from the Policy Research Centre (Steunpunt Ruimte: research by 3 universities for the administration Spatial Planning Flanders), i.e. conclusions from the research on methods for future explorations and collective learning for complex spatial issues (Kuhk, et al, 2016). This study analyses stimulating large-scale pilot practices, identifies crucial methodological issues and formulates valuable policy-recommendations. In our analysis, we acknowledge collaboration as means (methodological aspects), as a goal (collectivity aspect), and as a medium (collective learning as a mode of 'rehearsing the future'). Collective learning has a huge potential for collaboration in planning practice. The recommendations in the paper built on and attempt to widen results from separate case-studies, i.e. to allow for a more generalized implementation. It is hoped this critical analysis will stimulate the ongoing stakeholder consultations and partner debates and thus amend the document that will be prepared for preliminary approval and public consultation.

KEYWORDS: collaboration, collective learning, policy planning, uncertainty

1 INTRODUCTION

The socio-spatial issues which face spatial planners are complicated. Reasons can be found in the combined effects of interrelated (f)actors within the planning processes and of influences from a wider context. Consider, for example, how the city of Antwerp closed the slaughterhouses in the Lange Lobroek street after the European Food Agency changed the rules on slaughter in response to livestock epidemics in the 1990s. European food policies, in other words, had important implications for urban development, for employment, for existing infrastructure, …. In abstract terms, this means that elements from a broader 'contextual' environment interact with the 'transactional' environment of spatial policy (see Kuhk, et al., 2016: 12), i.e. elements outside the planner's influence with an impact on planning. Moreover, developing new land policy for the slaughterhouse site cannot be a purely public decision, but needs to be done in consultation with the private sector because of the distribution of ownership (see Kuhk, Dehaene, 2017). On top of that, any decision will generate effects that cannot be forecasted because of complex interferences between physical, social and mental agencies. The Dam neighbourhood, that is the historical location of the slaughterhouse, is going through a (still rather smooth) phase of gentrification, generated by replacing a strong physical barrier (a railway-yard) by a successful huge public park. Corollary, physical opening up is complemented by social transformations such as influx of wealthier inhabitants. New housing development and densification raise the price of real estate. At the same time uneasiness grows because of 'hanging' decisions concerning (the impact of) huge infrastructure works on and along the Antwerp Ring. The city government is confronted with growing socio-spatial activism and demands for participation in decision making. Mistrust grows because decisions are postponed and citizen participation is window dressing … Such situations are very recognizable in planning. They are thoroughly complex. Goals are diverse; means are unknown or dispersed, the situation is frustratingly uncertain. 'At the edge of order and chaos' (Waldrop, 1992), the compact expression for complex systems is applicable: these phenomena are decentralized, highly spontaneous, dynamic, interacting in a non-linear way, but adaptive as a living system.

2 EMERGING APPROACHES IN PLANNING & DESIGN

2.1 SOME THEORETICAL POSITIONS VIS-À-VIS UNCERTAINTY

Planning theory has evolved in order to cope with the complexity of such situations. Although we are aware of "the growing diversity of approaches within what is now broadly categorized as spatial planning" (Haughton, et al., 2010: 2) two 'opposing' kinds of approaches can be mentioned as indication of a more general tendency.

Criticizing modernist comprehensive regulatory land-use planning, structure planning focused on essentials. The comprehensive character (encompassing, controlling, zoning, …) is replaced by strategic choices, such as prioritizing crucial issues or transformations with a levering effect. The controlling blue-print character vanishes through planning for infrastructures and physical/natural structures, thus leaving room for further development, adaptable to territorial and social local characteristics. The abstract and passive character is replaced by dynamic integration of long term visioning, realized projects and continuous citizen participation. Albrechts' plea is to 'take strategic planning beyond its usual boundaries and traditions' and 'to reinvent itself' (Albrechts, 2017: 400). He stretches strategic structure planning to its rational limits. "Broadening the scope of the possible and imagining the impossible", strategic planning still 'needs an arena', "an open dialogue in which a plurality of interests and demands, opinions, images, conflicts, different values and power relationships are addressed" (Albrechts, 2017: 400).

Starting from a poststructuralist relational pragmatism, Jean Hillier re-conceptualizes 'planning as strategic navigation': structured experimentation, yet speculative and creative (Hillier, 2010: 470). "Strategic spatial planning as strategic navigation is a performance of risk-taking, of not being in total control, of transcending the technicalities of planning practice to create an 'open reading frame for the emergence of unprecedented events'" (Hillier, 2010: 473).

Strategic navigating involves the community by fabulation. 'Fabulation' is a 'conceptual groping towards potential-to-be', oscillating 'between reality and the virtual', intersecting in 'a state of transformation or a becoming'. (p. 470) Following Deleuze, Hillier states that becoming should be expressed as a collective will, 'a collaborative process of invention', belonging to a community, a collective but non-unifying articulation of differences, to produce 'common thought'. "Common thought is the outcome of a process in which differences are neither suppressed nor superseded, but in which they are integrated into a 'whole' " (Hillier, 2010: 470).

This implies starting with the living, changing and evolving actors or agents themselves in order to respond to such a non-linear world full of complexities (de Roo & Boelens, 2016: 20).

Both approaches, rather debating 'deliberative opportunities', or rather fabulating 'common thought', become aware of a condition of becoming, of open lines of flight, of uncertainty. This condition of uncertainty is partly due to the plurality of stakeholders. At the same time stakeholders are the basic 'ingredient' to cope with that uncertainty. And both deploy consciously rich concepts to imagine spatial planning by adaptive practices that involve stakeholders and communities intensively. But will 'arena' or 'navigation' work on the floor? In other words: would it not be helpful to construct an imagination for collaboration in conditions of uncertainty that is corresponding more to the need for sharing?

Uncertainty as a condition of planning has been addressed time and again. The most obvious uncertainty is produced by the fact that the future development of the complex socio-ecological system is not knowable because of the non-linear character of changes. On top of that at any moment, uncertainties in decision-making include 'uncertainties about the working environment', 'uncertainties about guiding values' and 'uncertainties about related decisions' (Healey, 2006: 255). When (many) stakeholders are involved, their different values, perspectives, desires and demands most probably will bring in disagreement and thus even more uncertainties about the outcome of a planning process. The most common situation entails so much uncertainty and disagreement about planning goals and means that it has be coined as 'irreducible uncertainty' (Bertolini, 2010: 413).

Collaboration is a second key-term. Bertolini is attracted by the notion of 'wicked' planning problems, as coined by Rittel and Webber, and even more by their suggestion of 'second generation approaches' to cope with the resulting irreducible uncertainty. "Approaches of the "second generation" should be based on a model of planning as an argumentative process in the course of which an image of the problem and of the solution emerges gradually among the participants, as a product of incessant judgment, subjected to critical argument." (Rittel & Webber, 1973: 162)

Basically this quote has everything to help conceptualize planning as collaboration in uncertainty: stakeholders involved in a process of deliberative critical communication, gradually building an image of how ends and means are related. The tendency of emerging new models and practices in planning also reached Flanders. By analysing practices we can learn what kinds of capacities are needed for such adaptable trajectories of collaborative planning.

2.2 TOWARDS A 'POLICY PLAN ON SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT' IN FLANDERS

Flanders is a region of Belgium that became gradually semi-autonomous, due to an enduring step-wise process of federalization starting from 1980. During the last 50 years three important shifts in the planning system can be discerned.

In 1962 a new Belgian law installed a comprehensive planning system. The Spatial Planning Act stipulated that municipalities were obliged to design general as well as partial land use plans. Statutory land-use plans also had to be developed at regional and national level (gewestplan, streekplan, national plan). When installed, this law was considered to be a major step forward towards a systematically controlled and geographically complete spatial development. Practice was not completely fulfilling these expectations however. The statutory character was weakened because many compulsory plans were never developed. Binding land use plans only exist at the sub-regional level (gewest) and at (parts of) municipalities at the local level.

Already since the mid '70s critiques were formulated concerning this comprehensive land use planning practice (Albrechts, 1974). The planning system was considered to focus too much on legal aspects and control by zoning, to decide at hoc and treat plans in a passive way, ….. Framed as structure planning, a new approach was elaborated which should be imaginative, strategic, action-oriented and participatory. Louis Albrechts, Charles Vermeersch and Jef Van de Broeck co-designed the new Spatial Structure Plan on the level of Flanders (RSV) (Ruimte Vlaanderen, 1998). They fell the "need for a planning discourse as a set of ideas, notions, concepts, a frame of reference, a system of meaning with which ideas and arguments are articulated and whose goal is to undertake initiatives that affect (spatial) development and everyday life." (Albrechts, 2007: 92).

Selecting a limited number of critical issues, constructing strategies, and carrying strategies forward towards implementation, while mobilizing the public in order to gain acceptance and support for the strategies and solutions to the problems, were the main principles of spatial structure planning in Flanders. The principle of 'subsidiarity' of relationships between levels of governance was brave, but almost 'forgotten' in practice. Albrechts sees the idea to "intervene more directly, coherently and selectively" (Albrechts, 2007: 92) as the crux of "the decision to replace traditional land use (zoning) systems by an approach wherein planning develops an overall spatial policy framework." (Albrechts, 2007: 94)

In 2011 already the Flemish administration of spatial planning started a broad participatory trajectory. An interactive information campaign and several debates were used as basis for reflection on the present state and on future spatial policy. This was the start to replace the (strategic) structure planning system by policy planning. The process towards the BRV started with a Green Paper (approved 04.05.2012) and has been elaborated into a second preliminary text, the White Paper (approved by the Flemish Government on 30.11.2016). This document is presented as a base for consultation with (possible) partners as a trajectory of operationalisation (Ruimte Vlaanderen, 2016: 3).

Accordingly, the RSV will be replaced by the BRV (Beleidsplan Ruimte Vlaanderen: literally translated meaning 'policy plan for space in Flanders'). Contrary to the RSV this preliminary document does not contain a graphic plan, but intentions, ambitions and principles. Therefor we will call BRV a 'spatial policy document', analogous to 'spatial structure plan'. BRV conveys a vision on future spatial development, which is however at the moment still largely to be translated into policy-frames, development programs and lists of actions, and to be supported by rules and instruments.

Reasons for this shift to policy planning are not expressed very explicitly, probably because they are diverse and partly eschewing discussion. We imagine the main reasons may be found within an inchoate implementation of structure planning, the (changing) context, political prerogatives and the planning system itself. Gaps between principles and practices have been identified and criticized repeatedly. These were a burden for the effectivity and the fame of structure planning. An official assessment of the RSV did not lead to devastating criticism (Ruimte Vlaanderen, 2010). According to the administration, which is developing the new approach primarily internally, the RSV is not so much a 'wrong' vision, but rather outdated (Ruimte Vlaanderen, 2016). New and changing societal challenges – mentioned are: globalisation, demography, mobility, climate, energy, technological innovation, food production, biodiversity and related spatial conditions – ask for an actualization. It sounds as a convincing argument. However, within the structure planning model, these challenges could have been easily added since according to its

principles the RSV needs to be actualized every 10-15 years anyhow. Therefore, frustration might be a more important reason for renewing the planning approach than outdatedness.

The White Paper expresses (finally!) a certain sense of urgency. Graphic representations of the cumulative effects of the daily 'consumption' (6 ha.) of space in Flanders, repeatedly shown, seem to work as a wake-up call. The nick-name of the policy document, 'betonstop' (meaning: stop pouring concrete in the Flemish landscape), reveals ambitions as well as slight panic. However, politicians feel hindered to intervene because of the rigid interpretation given by most administrations to the policy-vision of RSV, and also because of the rather cumbersome procedure to change a structure plan. Thus shifting from a structure plan to policy planning might as well be inspired by the occasions to introduce more flexibility. It is the explicit intention to not make a plan, but stick to general principles for development, complemented by strategic policy frames. These frames can be changed in a short time span, without too much interference from stakeholders or councils.

As to the planning system, several shortcomings have surfaced since 1996 and should be remediated. However, continuity is apparent. The White paper announces the intention to build further upon the main lines of RVS. The existing spatial structures remain the base for future spatial development (Ruimte Vlaanderen, 2016: 4). Development of cities and villages will be linked to public transport and facilities. Existing concentrations of companies are consolidated as a major economic structure. Concentration and bundling are still crucial spatial principles; together with performant collective transport those will be strategic measures to control mobility and safeguard open space. The centre of gravity for development will still be the Flemish Diamond (a main spatial concept of the RSV) but in a nuanced and amended form: centralities created by nodes of public transport and services will steer development. The main ambitions became stronger: gradually abolish the consumption of additional space for building and development while preserving qualities and (added) value for the whole society; use integrated area development as a motor for collaboration with stakeholders.

2.3 "WE WILL PRODUCE THE NEW SPACE TOGETHER"

The BRV explicitly enumerates 10 'policy-changes' compared to the RSV. These will support the new planning approach to shift from a comprehensive and regulatory attitude towards a spatial policy based on conditioned partnership. The new directions announced are: from comprehensive to strategic content, from hierarchic collaboration to equivalent partnership, form programmatic and territorial delineation to integrated territorial development, from geographic expansion to transformation of existing built-up space, from growth based on hierarchy to development based on potentialities of city-centres, from mono-functional to multifunctional roles for open space, towards innovative concepts for climate and energy, from supply-based policy to a project-based approach, form strict prognoses-based quota for housing to flexible programing, complementing land use control with monitoring realizations (Ruimte Vlaanderen, 2016).

While 9 out of 10 changes were repeated from the Green Paper to the White Paper, one intention was changed. It is not clear why the 1st intention – from technocratic to participatory plan-making – was dropped? To make room for monitoring, while sticking to the round number of 10 shifts? To avoid discussions about the meaning of a loaded word such as 'participation'? Or to evacuate the issue of participation and to stress instead collaboration, as a more neutral term?

Anyway, it is a fact that the policy-document (Ruimte Vlaanderen, 2016) on special development is leaning on and even depending on collaboration very much. It states that spatial development will be the result of collaboration. Each policy level will have its own responsibilities. Flanders will allow for partnerships by setting strategic conditions and allowing local implementation of these principles. Mutual agreements about preparing spatial development can be made via – much stressed – integrated area development. Deliberately, the new policy document will leave room for development to measure. The Flemish government will no longer test local plans based on a comprehensive assessment frame. Instead, the regional government will assist in looking for solutions, based on specific principles and frames, and argues that solutions will only exceptionally be regulated. Stipulating frames with conditions, being exemplary (project-)director and supporting territorial development will the principles guiding the conduct of Flanders' administration. Striving for integrated (area) development, collaboration will be intensive. In short, collaboration is strongly imbedded within policy planning-in-the-making. Policy-actions will be a

result of collaborative trajectories. They will make policy action-oriented by summing up engagements of partners, including means and instruments, within an agreed time frame.

It is not clear however what 'collaboration' will mean in practice, both in terms of aims and of effects.

For provinces and municipalities collaboration is not compulsory, so it seems. Flanders' administrations is inviting those government levels to collaborate, by focusing on expected advantages such as quality gains, advantages of scale, coordination of policy, programs and tasks, creating better mutual understanding, diminishing risk for dissensus and conflict, etcetera. The White Paper hints to a broad pallet of possible modes of collaboration: between government-levels, across boundaries of municipalities, provinces and even regions, between policy domains, with a diversity of partners such as civil society, inhabitants, entrepreneurs. Probably the intensity of collaboration will differ according to the situations at hand. The main framing is however 'partnership'. The document qualifies this as a relationship based on equivalence. On the same pages however is announced that Flanders' government will create and set conditions. How contradictory this will be is unclear because they are not published yet.

The optimistic tone about the acclaimed collaboration is striking. Working around the table 'in consensus' is expected to integrate interests and to limit or avoid conflicts afterwards. This optimism sounds exaggerated at first sight. Consensus in spatial planning is not obvious, and Flanders' administration is nog known as consensus builder either. Optimism might however also be the result of some successful experiences and experiments. Of the ones mentioned in the BRV, the more interesting seem to be three Territorial Development Projects (T.OP) for: the northern border of Brussels, the former coal-belt in the province of Limburg, the Coastal region. These are all initiated by Labo Ruimte (Lab Space), a formal collaboration between the administration Ruimte Vlaanderen (spatial planning) and the Team Vlaams Bouwmeester (Flemish government architect). These are ambitious and promising examples of integrated area development projects, where collaboration is at stake. And they are directed by the administration which is writing the White Paper.

Collaborating should go beyond working together on a contract-basis. Collective learning is a crucial aspect of collaboration because it delivers answers to important aspects such as arriving at consensus, suitable frames, and collective assets.

3 COLLECTIVE LEARNING RESPONDS TO UNCERTAINTY IN PLANNING

3.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF COLLECTIVE LEARNING WITH INCREASED UNCERTAINTIES

Why focus on collective learning processes in spatial issues? In the cases studied, similar changes become apparent. In the broader context, more and new challenges (climate change, migration, economy ...) raise uncertainties about future developments. New insights regarding the complex nature of the human-environment system are grafted to these challenges. Alternative planning approaches try to deal with different dimensions of uncertainty (unpredictable changes and complex adaptive systems, …) through more open processes. Collective learning starts from a field of players who can differ significantly in terms of capacity, importance and position. These actors try to develop a shared problematization and a shared sense of meaning. A process of collective learning in the context of spatial innovations shows a strong resemblance to learning processes pure sang (Capello, 1999). What distinguishes both is the emphasis on the collective dimension of the learning process, and the intended collective purpose of the learning process (De Laat & Simons, 2002). The result of a collective learning process does not belong to one actor, but it has been shared in one way or another. In dealing with conflicting positions and dissensus in major social emergencies, collective learning trajectories, among other things, offer the opportunity to develop new or adapted frameworks, including the collective dimension of complex issues. Based on the cases studied, we briefly summarize the capacity we assign to collective learning.

3.1.1 COLLECTIVE LEARNING AS RECOGNITION OF MULTIPLICITY AND DISSENSUS

In current societal challenges such as climate change, aging, migration, mobility or energy transitions, there seems to be a growing consensus on the importance and urgency of these transitions. Whilst it is agreed that something should happen, this apparent consensus vanishes as soon as concrete objectives

are formulated and solutions are sought. Behind the consensus on urgency, conflicting interests and fundamentally different normative frameworks hide. Uncertainty about the future developments of the major challenges does not help the consensus to be installed. Pluralism and conflict indeed are well known phenomena in spatial planning.

In the cases we studied in the MOS research, current planning approaches show weak signals of a 'reassessment' in response to major societal challenges. In this regard, collective learning trajectories and sociocratic planning approaches seem to come more easily into the picture. Characteristic is a simultaneous attention to actors' ability to act, and to the broader contextual environment. For example, MKL2100 focuses on policy questions in a broader perspective of climate change, or does the proposals for LaboXX also take into account a changing demographic situation. Actors are involved in processes of change, sharing the provisional knowledge and the "advancing insight" with as many parties as possible. Collective learning does not focus on levelling out differences, but makes differences visible, discussable, and manageable in iterative processes. Organizing (more) equal and shared access to knowledge and expertise is essential: this strengthens the ability of a group to cope with pluralism and contradiction. In any case pluralism and dissensus may be recognized earlier in the process, which is crucial in any sphere of collaboration. It is only one step further to become aware that dissensus does not necessarily imply antagonism (see also Mouffe, 2000, 'agonism') and does not exclude searching for a shared imagination of collaboration.

3.1.2 COLLECTIVE LEARNING PROCESSES AS STRATEGY FOR APPROPRIATE FRAMEWORKS

The condition of uncertainty that spatial planning seeks to address is not just a matter of a changing contexts, new urges and targets weighting on consensus. Planning is also a search for suitable (spatial) frameworks to address problems: a scale level, a territorial definition, a proper sectoral bond, an institutional link or legal framework. Major social and physical challenges put pressure on existing relations. Social challenges such as accelerating urbanization, demographic growth, or systemically complex sustainability issues might possibly not be addressable within existing (institutionalized) relationships. Urban issues, for example, do not necessarily coincide with territorial contours (see, for example, T.OP Noordrand or Plantage issues), or can run square against the logic of planning demarcations or administrative frameworks. Economic relations, political networks or socio-cultural interactions are heavily structured by previous choices and path dependencies, thus provoking lock-ins. But also new relationships are developing in contingent and unpredictable ways, thus impeding addressing as usual. Collective learning has the potential to deal with contingency and path dependency. Collective learning trajectories jointly define appropriate paths, resulting in shared insights, practices and values, created in a field of collective experience. Collective learning trajectories heavily bear on experiments exploring and assessing various possible action frameworks. (For example, at the Metropolitan Coastal Landscape 2100, at T.OP Noordrand and at Living Labs, ad hoc or more structural cooperation across land, regional or municipal boundaries was sought because socio-spatial issues develop on a different scale than the Administrative institutional scale). New connections and overlapping synergies originate by connecting projects, as in the rather experimental setting of the Kolenspoor project (see Coaltrack as part of T.OP Limburg: Schreurs, 2016). Also new partnerships can help to categorize issues differently (for example, through an activist position and broad mobilization, Ringland faced the problem of the Antwerp traffic jam not only as a mobility issue, but first and foremost as a liveability issue. An ambition to act was installed already at a moment when the outcome was still anything but clear.)

3.1.3 COLLECTIVE LEARNING AS INSTIGATING COLLECTIVITY

Within the context of spatial issues, collective learning means learning from one another, learning to learn from one another, but also – and even more important - learning to recognize the collectivity-dimension of the subject of concern. Concerning spatial planning issues such as urban food supply, housing, mobility or energy, this dimension of collectivity has two sides. The spatial transitions which the experimental planning strategies we investigated try to offer, are not just challenges that need collective efforts in order to be successfully realized. They also confront us with the gains and losses the collectives (have to) face. Import of food, lack of affordable housing, traffic jams, fossil energy ... in one way or another externalize costs towards society at large or towards local communities. Social cost of Flanders' systematic dispersed development became very apparent in the issues at Living Labs, on the one hand, the corridor formation

along the N16 and the de facto clustering around the regional transport knot in Denderleeuw on the other hand, are examples.

4 ANALYZING COLLECTIVE LEARNING TRAJECTORIES IN A CHANGING FLEMISH LANDSCAPE OF PLANNING

4.1 AN ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK FOR COLLECTIVE LEARNING

The Flemish spatial planning world is in motion: recently, some new kinds of initiatives were created with an important role for collective learning. In this contribution we present an analytical framework with four generic parameters as well as a number of process characteristics. The CALT-R framework was progressively developed for (and while making) a sharper description of running trajectories, but it can also be used to launch new collective learning trajectories in spatial planning. The generic concepts of the analytical framework are a preparation for tailoring concrete cases, based on negotiation or targeted experiments.

From 2007 to 2016 a Policy Research Centre Spatial Planning was founded by the Flemish Ministry. The last 4 years its research focused on four themes: polycentrism, resilience, monitoring & evaluation, and future explorations. The research on ‘future explorations’ aimed to concentrate on potential added values of combining scenario-analysis and research-by-design as strategies to deal with uncertainty. The research was based on literature (planning, design, policy-science, systems, future explorations, learning, …) and on methodological workshops fed by thorough understanding of seven real life cases (amongst which the three T.OP already mentioned) and two pilots of living labs organized by the Policy Research Centre. A main focus was 'collective learning'. This was framed as a form of actor-oriented, flexible knowledge management focused on the recognition of uncertainty, a condition that is innate in future explorations.

In the so-called ‘MOS’ research (acronym for Methodologisch OnderzoeksSeminarie, meaning methodological research seminar), the work-package future explorations developed an analytical framework concerning collective learning trajectories in socio-spatial issues. This framework is a tool that leads to a more accurate self-description of complex trajectories, and that is designed to support a critical methodological evaluation. The analytical framework can also be a starting point to launch new collective learning trajectories. Based on the analysis of several different cases, we consider an explicit reflection on the methodology as being necessary for the further professionalization of spatial policies in dealing with complex socio-spatial issues. So far, methodological issues often remain underexposed, e.g. in the education for spatial planners, in multi-actor processes or in the evaluation of complex processes in the development of socio-spatial issues.

The analytical framework is not merely a theoretical-abstract conceptualization: it was gradually developed using the input from practitioners involved in regional and local cases (Kuhk et al., 2016). Participatory observation, document analysis and two series of interviews were combined. The results of the interviews were discussed and further deepened in two systematically documented methodological research seminars. The iterative process of interviews and methodological research seminars is in itself also a collective learning process, and can be conceived as a meta-trajectory to help building insights about existing projects. The analytical framework is referred to with the acronym CALT-R, which stands for "Conditions | Actors | Learning | Thresholds || Relations ". These notions refer to the recurring sections in the analysis of collective learning trajectories (CALT) as well as to the relationships (R) between these aspects. The analytical frame serves as a 'descriptive grid' for tangible cases. The framework uses concepts of public policy studies (e.g. about strategies for change), from sociology (including the concept of ‘boundary objects’), from pedagogy (e.g. learning styles) and from literature on future investigations (e.g. dealing with uncertainties and path dependencies).

4.2 RELEVANCE OF COLLECTIVE LEARNING TRAJECTORIES IN A LANDSCAPE IN MOTION

For a long time, the rationally comprehensible model of planning has been relieved by variants of collaborative or strategic planning. This development acknowledges that the isolated, autonomous knowledge of the ‘expert’ is not sufficient to ‘master’ the complexity of social-ecological systems. Spatial planning, understood as deliberate dealing with spatial characteristics with a view to a more sustainable and resilient future requires dealing with irreversible uncertainties. The uncertainties are partly due to pluriformity and dissensus within society as well as to shifts in the nature of planning issues themselves (so-called 'wicked problems'). What is proposed in positive terms as a landscape in motion can also be experienced as a landscape in crisis, where inability to deal with uncertainties results in great uncertainty about the approaches to be applied and their institutional anchoring. We witness both institutional emptiness and institutional hustle and bustle. How can planning be a compass for urgent social issues while interventions for future developments are faced with irreversible uncertainties? How can spatial policy introduce 'planned' changes into a world that changes itself? We identified several conditions where collective learning pathways can be a relevant answer:

1. In a shared recognition of a problem, for the time being, without a shared normative point of view: Collective learning allows for conflicting positions. This is just as important in spatial planning, given that choices often make or prevent developments in the long term, involve a large group of people and require a substantial budget.
2. Recognition of a shared problem: Nevertheless, collective learning is relevant to issues with a clear collectivity dimension, where the effects of choices involve a large group of actors, where social, ecological or financial benefit can be achieved by collaborating with different policy areas and/or policy levels.
3. For shared recognition of shared frameworks: Collective learning trajectories are iterative processes with different experts (interdisciplinary), bringing together implementation-based practice with more conceptual reflections or explorations (transdisciplinary). In this constellation, existing frameworks can be adapted, can be searched for other or combined scales (e.g. by linking the local to regional, by understanding singular cases as part of a family of cases), or may be innovative sectoral, institutional or territorial relations.

4.3 CALT-R: FROM GENERIC FRAMEWORK TO TAILORED APPROACH THROUGH NEGOTIATION AND EXPERIMENTATION.

Based on the cases studied a number of recurring subjects were identified as important. Planning would gain if more rigorous attention would be provided to these. The CALT-R framework brings them together. The analytical framework holds an invitation for systematic reflection on the process and methodological development of collective learning trajectories, without pursuing uniform processes or methods. The conclusion is not that the process of the trajectory should be standardized, but that attention for and reflection on the process can be much more systematic. The best known search strategy to deal with such complex and uncertain situations is trial and error: keep trying until it works. In real life situations of spatial planning this kind of experimentation is seldom possible. Trial and error would probably imply important investments and possibly have a tremendous impact on different users (residents, entrepreneurs, investors ...). More intelligent heuristics are needed. Simulation could replace blind trial. Collective learning processes have been raised here as a more performant and effective search strategy for relevant and accurate interventions. Searching for variants creates tailored work, as is shown strikingly in the cases. For example, a selection of actors can be made based on institutional-sectoral affiliations or be based on discipline-specific expertise. These can be combined with socio-psychological type-casting and plausible roles of actors. A collective tailor-made learning process benefits from using different 'lenses'. It helps to look beyond the list of 'usual suspects', and rather to scan with an open, but sharp look, at a landscape in motion. Two action strategies are very important: negotiation and experimentation (cf. Christensen, 1985). Both can be seen as crucial modes of knowledge sharing. The majority of practices in the cases testifies of some Experimentierfreude, i.e. desiring - or acknowledging the need - to set up experiments. Experiments are an intelligent and cautious response to the difficulty of dealing with uncertainties. Learning by doing is a more intelligent and effective heuristic than sticking to transmitted certitudes. This results in trajectories that seek to acknowledge the complexity of current planning tasks, while testing methods, partnerships, roles and practices. Remarkably, the cases show that scenarios and design research are often pivotal for the emergence of experiments in a co-evolutionary iterative process. Typically variations are produced and

selections are made based on multiple cycles of debates, generated by the implicit questions ‘what if?’ respectively 'why not?'. This tailoring of relevant questions and possible answers is able to cross-link the more exploratory, long-term perspectives with action-oriented rationalities of current problems and demands. This meshwork of concerns helps to keep the trajectory open and searching, away from a linear project logic, rational means-ends relationships and overt sequential process steps.

4.4 COLLECTIVELY LEARNING ABOUT CURRENT CHALLENGES IN FLANDERS?

A number of initiatives were set up in order to develop the BRV as a canvassing and substantiated story in the planned shift from structure planning into policy planning: partner dialogues, various working groups, directing in 10 bottom-up test areas, etc. The BRV challenges are inextricably linked to wider societal issues and urgencies. On the one hand they are visible in current circumstances, but on the other hand also have consequences in the longer term. The White Paper recognizes a number of (shared) challenges, and acknowledges that new frameworks and suitable tailoring may be necessary. It is easy to argue why collective learning trajectories are the better heuristics with these types of questions. Through the lens of the CALT-R analysis framework, the BRV-process qualifies as a collective learning trajectory for some aspects, but to a lesser degree for other aspects. In terms of intensions there seems to be scope for negotiation, tailoring and experimentation (Ruimte Vlaanderen, 2016: 11, 45). The need for appropriate frameworks is acknowledged, for example for cross-border collaborations (Ruimte Vlaanderen, 2016: 135) or in response to specific local conditions. However, the White Paper also emphasizes the consensus principle (Ruimte Vlaanderen, 2016: 134), the orientation towards implementation, and sometimes even rather linear logic (e.g. on p. 45, indicating that the spatial program for area-based projects should already be known from the beginning). This contradicts the results of research into collective learning trajectories, which evidenced that precisely the accommodation of dissensus is an important aspect in dealing with complex issues and uncertainties. The aims of collective learning processes are expanding and enriching, in favour of realisation, but also of exploration of complex socio-spatial issues, thus interrelating short term (possibly in agonism) and long term (hopefully in consensus). Collective learning trajectories may run against regimes of consensual governance, but do not run away of complex issues. Rather: dissensus or "well-reasoned disagreement" is essential in democratic decision-making (see Laermans et al., 2016: 49), based on the expectation that, in the case of normative uncertainties, adapted frameworks will arise in particular from a deliberative debate, imaginative negotiation and targeted experiments.

5 CONCLUSIONS

Flanders faces urban and regional societal and spatial challenges. A new regime of policy planning (BRV) will be installed to cope with these conditions. In the White Paper, the preliminary text for BR, collaboration is seen as a relief of the existing hierarchical plan-cascade (Ruimte Vlaanderen, 2016: 11). This is a brave but correct choice. ‘We will produce the new space together’ is motto that deserves and needs support. But collaboration is not obvious. Collaboration implies more than bringing actors together and to discuss what needs to happen, why and when. Collaboration will have to gather collectives, working towards (shared) recognition of (shared) problems and giving these (shared) meanings. Within the conditions of extreme uncertainty, which are always present in spatial planning, collective learning is a crucial aspect … That’s what we found out, based on an intensive investigation of real live cases and living labs. Hoping to contribute to the concept of collaboration as collective learning, we conclude with three suggestions.

1. Collective learning is a complicated process. It is wise to be concerned about the crucial aspects of that process. From the MOS-seminars we learned that many of those aspects can be identified and linked in a framework we called CALT-R. This framework can help methodological follow-up during and after a collaborative process. It can also be used to anticipate the crucial characteristics in future processes. A systematic and explicit engagement with the methodological aspects seems a must to us. This will contribute to the learning within every collaboration process. It will also build up a meta-learning process across different cases: learning about collective learning.

2. Collective learning allows and enables work made to measure. The potentials for responding to the latent crisis are unevenly distributed, because the influence reaches evident, but also unexpected places, well-equipped but also unprepared situations of governance. The ability to organize collective

resilience requires a necessary critical mass in terms of expertise, means, …. An open process, fed by diverse attitudes, knowledge and experiences, interactively co-designing, co-operating and co-producing, is well-fit for dealing with specific situations (conditions, actors, knowledge, thresholds) and contexts. But flexibility without frames becomes chaos. Frames must and will play a role. As mentioned, finding or making practically adequate frames to address challenges and answers is part of the reduction of structural uncertainty. Therefor the role of the policy frames announced within the White Paper, will be crucial. The thematic choices are important, but even more the form that will allow addressability (and responsibility).

3. Collective learning seems to be a potential candidate for a collective imagination that can cope with planning in uncertainty. The terms of 'collective learning' imply both a vision (on learning as changing, adaptive, becoming, …) and collaboration (exemplifying the collective as collectivity, equity, sharing, …). Imagining a subject for collective learning would make this candidature even stronger. We suggest to conceptualize collective learning for trajectories called 'rehearsing the future'. Through that lens, policy planning becomes: directing performances of multitudes of actors, taking time to dive into the unknown, elaborating simultaneously strategies and frames, collectively, iteratively, learning by doing and reflecting while doing, until uncertainty becomes 'incertainty', that is: the merging of an uncertain avenir (French, a second term for future, meaning 'to be coming', 'becoming', 'ever changing') and an expected, seemingly knowable future (Schreurs and Kuhk, 2015).

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ID 1660 | CHALLENGES AND TRICKY WORDS. A STRONGER ROLE FOR PLANNERS

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ABSTRACT: In the last 20 years, a deliberate strategy of impoverishment of local governments argued the imperative need of: a) involving at all (public) costs, the private sector through the “trojan horse” of governance (Miraftab 2004); b) designing big and shortsighted urban projects (frequently destroying public resources and ignoring public needs) through the mantra of the urban and territorial competition. As it has been already noted, “by elevating Governance above Government, and Economics above Politics, the globalpolicy undermined nation- and state-building capacities in many Countries” (Demmers, Jilberto, Hogenboom, 2004). Moreover, through the rhetoric on pluralism, the neo-liberal governance has contributed to shrink and destroy the relevanceof public interest. In fact, behind the 'screen' of governance and the representation of an amorphous citizenship and a notqualified of diffuse interests, the deployment of capitalism has prevailed. This legitimized the partial and strongest interests into shaping the public agenda within the polarized inequalities. In thisframework, the paper will give some suggestions and advices for rethinking current problems, and trying to deal with them,by starting by the critical evaluation of some words we use. Moreover, by focusing on the ethic of responsibility andaccountability of planners (and for most of us as planning scholars), the paper argues that a stronger role for planners andplanning scholars has to do with our own field of responsibility (such as professionals/practitioners/scholars), andmoreover with our commitment in building and using new theories and research approaches at least to: a) incorporate the ‘others’/minorities by considering furthermore the interaction between capitalism accumulation in space and the minorities (Yiftachel 2013); b) improve critical urban theories mixing with place-based planning and research practices (Campbell 2012; 2014), by applying different approaches; c) co-produce (Watson 2014) a public model of development, being aware of the oligopolistic elites and extractive institutions (Acemouglou, Robinson, 2012).