

Celebrating the Individual: Intentions for Urban Development

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Societal changes such as growing complexity and fragmentation in society have great effects on Dutch planning practice. Once a highly conceptualized and governmental planning system, efforts are now made to transform Dutch planning practice into a more development-oriented approach and new possibilities for participation are explored. A shift towards more involvement of individual residents and small scale entrepreneurs in planning can be perceived. Especially concerning inter-urban planning issues, such as urban regeneration, success is largely depending on the involvement of many individual actors and their actions. To articulate this involvement and the urban dynamics it produces, self organization is explored in this paper as possible governance style in urban development. However, the institutional framework in which planning takes place still seems hardly able to incorporate or facilitate processes of self organization in urban development. Newly developed planning approaches create more possibilities for understanding and incorporating urban dynamics. This paper elaborates on these insights and on the necessity of the notion of self organization in the current transformation of Dutch planning practice. Questions on how self organization manifests itself and whether it can be a governance style in urban regeneration are occurring.

Changes in Dutch planning

The contemporary institutional settings on which planning in the Netherlands are based originate from the beginning of the twentieth century. Extreme living conditions in cities led to the installation of the Housing Law (1901). This national law was the first to submit all new urban developments to general, national standards concerning the quality of housing conditions and city layouts. Before this law, new city layouts were mainly a coproduction between municipalities and developers. Through the Housing Law, its revisions and additional laws on spatial planning over the following decades, national government became an important partner in all spatial developments in the Netherlands. In 1965 the National Law on Spatial Planning was instated. This law structured the legal setting in which municipal, provincial and national spatial plans were developed, and the role of governmental layers in these plans. Over the years, a strong governmental approach evolved, based on the idea of a planned society. All urban developments got included in legal procedures and regulations, with a growing governmental monopoly on spatial planning. General concepts for spatial development such as new towns ('groei-kernen') became leading through all governmental layers in the 1960s-1970s. In the 1980s ideas on a market oriented planning approach appeared. Ideas of a planned society were still prevalent, both by market as by public parties (HABIFORUM et. al., 2006). The direct translation of the Dutch notion of 'ruimtelijke ordening' is 'spatial ordering', implicates that Dutch planning practice, through the years, been strongly based on an idea of 'normalization of space'.

In contemporary society governmental initiative is withdrawing, the welfare state is heavily discussed and private and civic arrangements are increasing. Societal shifts such as the rise of the network society or globalization transfer the 'working field' of planners, society, into a complex, multi-layered and rapidly ever-changing arena. (CASTELLS, 1996) (SASSEN, 1991) The planner as only spatial expert and general and overall concepts by government are no longer a matter of course (GRAHAM&HEALEY, 1999). After decennia in which governmental initiative was leading, more players have now entered the planning arena. Residents, private companies and civic organizations are increasingly partners in spatial development processes, due to the improved accessibility of information, possibilities for participation, legal procedures, empowerment, and weakened position of government in ground politics and decreased financial means of public parties (VROMRAAD, 2004). Together with societal changes such as growing complexity, multiplicity and fragmentation in society these changes have great effects on Dutch planning practice too.

These days, a redefinition of the leading approach in Dutch planning practice is looked for. The ministry of planning defined 'Gebiedsontwikkeling' (area development), as part of 'Ontwikkelingsplanologie' (development planning) (HABIFORUM et.al, 2006). Instead of a static approach based on end-terms and general concepts, as has been the practice of governmental planning for decennia, now an approach based on development is applied. Local characteristics, temporary cooperation of actors (integrative planning), civic coalitions and spatial investments are the elements of this approach (WRR, 1998). A new Law on Spatial Planning (instated on July 1st this year) restructures the role of governmental layers into a development oriented, framework setting role, in which other (public, private or civic) parties can operate. In short, the Netherlands is reorienting itself towards new planning approaches that answer to a growing social complexity.

Participation in a fragmented society

Transformation of Dutch planning towards a more development oriented approach, in answer of growing complexity and fragmentation, implicates a changing role of government towards public and civic parties. But fragmentation in society has let to a transformation of civic society as well. Civic organizations are no longer static communities or strong civic organisations such as major (national) interest groups, or communities structured along religious and political split-ups. Contemporary civic society is increasingly organized along temporary, changing and multiple interrelations, and has become more elusive and individual (KOFFIJBERG&RENOOY, 2008). Individual residents and small scale entrepreneurs are entering the stage of planning. Modern communication techniques form an important means in their organization and participation.

Citizen participation is of course not a new concept in Dutch planning practice. Forms of participation, though, changed over the years. During the 1970s participation came first into practice: citizens were enabled to give their views on policy made by government. When a spatial plan is decided upon, inhabitants of the concerning area are asked for their reaction. This reaction can lead to a revision of the plan or lead to a hold on developments until conflicts or disagreements are solved. This form of participation has become a general practice in planning procedures and is even a legal right these days. In the 1990s interactive policy making or coproduction came into practice. In addition to the earlier form of participation (which is mainly based on passive reacting on already developed plans), interactive policy making or coproduction tries to involve both public, private as civic parties in an early stage of the planning process. This form of participation is often used when government wants to

increase commitment for certain policy issues. A very recent form of participation (2000s) is the 'citizen initiative': citizens take their own responsibility and address their own issues; the government takes the role of facilitator (IPP, 2006).

All forms of participation are practiced in contemporary Dutch planning. The most recent form of participation seems to be answering the needs of residents and entrepreneurs for individual involvement. However, since the 'citizen initiative' is rather new in Dutch society, this form is still embryonic and in an experimental phase concerning planning practice.

Four fields in contemporary Dutch planning are exemplary for the way forms of participation are practiced. These are: new city layouts, large strategic urban regeneration, regional landscape development and urban regeneration in neighbourhoods.

In Almere Homeruskwartier, the concept of 'citizen initiative' is used for the development of new city layouts. Citizen initiative however, is unlikely to take place on a spatial and social 'tabula rasa', and the municipality of Almere considers coordination of individual initiatives in city layouts essential. So, infrastructure is laid out, plots are defined and a legal zoning plan is produced. Eventually, the 'citizen initiative' stays limited to individual design of houses, due to procedures a municipality conventionally is working with. (sLIM, 2008)

In a different field of planning, the development of large strategic projects, planning with 'citizen initiative' is even more embryonic. In the development of the Zuidas in Amsterdam, a new business (banking) district south of Amsterdam, only public and private parties were involved. Participation of civic groups only took place in a reactive way, and hardly influenced the eventual plan. These projects seem to focus on (inter-)regional, metropolitan developments only, and the relation to 'citizen initiative' is a very distant one. (sLIM, 2007)

Regional landscape development plans under the name of area development can be illustrated by the project of the Overdiepse Polder. In the Overdiepse Polder, consequence of the improvement of the adjoining river basin was the disappearance of agricultural land in the polder. Farmers objected, and proposed a plan in which both the river basin improvements as a transformation of the agricultural land were possible. This plan became leading in a process of coproduction between farmers and various public and private parties. Major difficulty in this coproduction was the long term procedures of government and short term expectations of the farmers. Most of the regional landscape projects however, largely depend upon public initiative and public-public partnerships. Only few projects are developed through public-private partnerships. Civic involvement often takes place either in a reactive way (traditional participation) or through coproduction. Conditions set by the municipal government can still be very defined and strict. (HABIFORUM et.al, 2006)

In a fourth field of planning, urban regeneration, 'citizen initiative' is becoming more and more a practice. Inter-urban developments are increasingly depended on the involvement of many individual actors and their actions. Experiments on more possibilities for individual initiatives do take place, such as the provision of 'vouchers' by local government, for citizens with ideas on improvement of public space. These initiatives stay very local and limited within policy frameworks set by governmental parties.

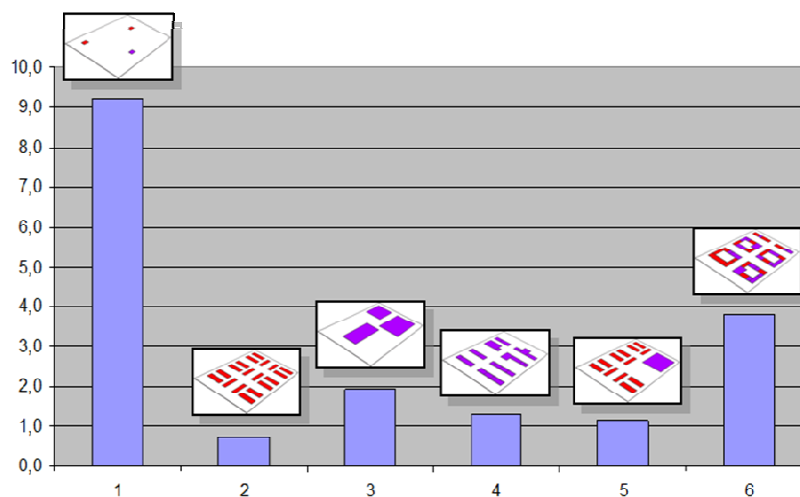
As can be learned by these cases, experiments with 'citizen initiative' are carried out, but stay often limited to strict governmental frameworks. The institutional framework, in which Dutch planning practice takes place, seems hardly fit to answer the demands of 'citizen initiatives'. This leaves the question whether the potential of this form of participation is fully used in urban development processes.

Self organization in urban development

In the process of transforming approaches in Dutch planning practice, a shift towards more involvement of individual residents and small scale entrepreneurs can be perceived. So far in this paper, the involvement of civic parties in planning procedures is studied. But individual residents and small scale entrepreneurs can play a role in urban development processes outside planning procedures too.

Examples for this can be found in the emergence of neighbourhood economy. Previous research for TNO (BOONSTRA, MANSHANDEN&ROSO, 2007) elaborated on how local spatial qualities play a role in economic growth. An analysis of Dutch cities and their neighborhoods showed that economic growth seems to concentrate within specific neighborhoods: mixed neighborhoods with small scale entrepreneurship have on averaged the fastest growing economy (measured in jobs) within the urbanized areas (*figure*). This emphasizes the importance of local economy adjacent to an urban, regional or international economy in the development of metropolitan areas. Although an increasing number of policymakers is aware of the importance and potentials of local economy, a good functioning local economy does not come from public investments only. Local and individuals actors, their intentions and actions play a large, if not major role in the development of the economy of a neighborhood.

This figure illustrates six types of neighbourhoods and their average growth in jobs over the period 1996-2005: 1. thinly occupied, 2. residential area, 3. working district with large companies, 4. working district with small companies, 5: mixed neighbourhood with large companies, 6: mixed neighbourhood with small companies. Within the urban context, mixed neighbourhoods with small scale entrepreneurs show on average the largest growth. (BOONSTRA, MANSHANDEN&ROSO, 2007)



Recently, local economy has come under attention of various policy makers, through the potential small scale entrepreneurship has on the quality and aliveness of urban neighborhoods. Local economy is often mentioned as an instrument for urban regeneration of deprived neighborhoods. Self organization (as the outcome of individual intentions and actions taken by individual residents and entrepreneurs) can be a means for this process, named by Jane Jacobs the process of 'unslumming slums' (JACOBS, 1961). Success in such a process of regeneration is largely depended on the involvement of many individual actors and their actions. However, these actors often operate apart from legally organized structures or regimes.

A difference between actors reasoning from their individual interest and actors reasoning from a collective perspective can be seen as the underlying cause of the difficulties concerning self organization. However, improvements of for instance the direct living environment can have benefits for larger areas as well, as can be learned from the case of unslumming slums. It underlines the importance of processes of self organization, the importance of connecting planning processes to existing urban dynamics and it illustrates the importance of individual (civil) actions in urban development processes from an economic point of view.

In Dutch planning practice, efforts are made to transform the leading approaches towards a more development oriented way of planning, in which public, private and civic parties are represented. By incorporating local characteristics, temporary cooperation of actors and civic coalitions in spatial planning processes and to relate spatial investments directly to these elements, the attempt is made to connect to existing processes and urban dynamics. However, two difficulties in relation towards the involvement of civic parties can be perceived. First, the increase of temporary, changing and multiple interrelations instead of static communities or strong civic organisations, has made civil society more elusive and harder to incorporate or involve in planning procedures. Second, the participation or involvement of civic groups in planning procedures does not necessarily mean existing processes and urban dynamics are incorporated in the planning procedure, since many actors operate apart or parallel too legally organized planning regimes. Incorporating processes of self organization in urban development can help to bridge this divide, but Dutch institutional settings are not yet applicable to do so. New planning insights, developed under the name of post structuralism, can contribute to this transformation.

New planning insights

New attention to difference in spatial identification and a new interest in processes of spatial emergence is characterizing contemporary geography, under the name of post structuralism. (MURDOCH, 2006) These new perspectives produce planning insights, based on urban development and transformations as outcome of a process of becoming and thus as a manifestation of the multiplicity in present day society. Growing pluralism of society, extension of individuation (HIRST&BADER, 2001), processes of democratisation and individualisation make it more urgent to perceive space as made by relations. In this sense, a 'normalization of space' can no longer be applicable (MURDOCH, 2006) and appropriate ways for urban development processes and planning have to be explored. In the Dutch context, development oriented planning is applied to address a dynamic society in spatial development. Although self organization can be seen as articulation of urban dynamics, how to connect such processes to Dutch planning practice is still a major question. To accomplish such a transition, it is necessary to change from a generalized approach towards an approach based on

actors and interrelations. Two theories are mentioned in this paper, which contribute to this transition: the theory of Inter-representational Networks (PORTUGALI, 1997) and Actor network Theory. (LATOUR, 2005) Both theories seek ways for understanding and dealing with present day societal complexity. A short elaboration of the theories follows.

Inter-Representational Networks (IRN)

The notion of inter-representational networks is the product of Portugali's theory on cities (as open and complex) self-organizing systems. In this theory, the city is defined as two self-organizing layers: first there is an infrastructural one and second there is a "superstructure layer of free agents", who do or do not act intentionally. *"The individual agents determine the city which can thus be seen as the external representation of their sections and behavior; and the city in its turn determines the internal representations (that is to say, cognitive maps) of individuals and through these their actions and behavior in the city, and so on in a circular causality."* Thus, the theory of IRN describes the city as the reciprocal product of initiatives of actors, influenced by personal / individual motives (caused by their environment) versus spatial developments that are in their turn product of collective actions. When perceived cities in this way, room is given for the notion of the city as a place of multiplicity and change, and its development as a continuous process of becoming. Portugali states that from this perspective, *"a new type of action in the city, a new type of city planning"* is needed, of which the aim is *"not to control, but to participate"*. (PORTUGALI 1997; 2006)

Actor Network Theory (ANT)

Actor Network Theory originates from the science and technology studies executed by Latour, Callon and Law. It describes the becoming of 'society' as the outcome of heterogeneous relations between actors and artefacts. Associations between actors and artefacts lay at the basis of networks of which 'society' is constructed. In Latours words: *"In short, there is no such thing as society: only (heterogeneous) networks. And space, too, is made ('materialized') by these networks."* Associations and their networks come into being when certain issues arise. Associations grow by a process named *"translation"*, through which a network around a certain issue is constructed. The theory does not necessarily focus on the outcome of this process, but emphasizes on the formation of the network itself: what actors and artefacts play a role in issues addressed, which entities of the network are organizing and what entities become organized? (LATOUR 2005, CALLON AND LATOUR 1981, LAW 1992) In urban development, associations are made by actors and artefacts too: not only through social interrelations but also through physical objects or structures. (JONG&WISSINK, 2008)

The theory on inter-representational networks originates in system theory, and mentions self organization as a concept for analyzing changes in an (urban) system. Systems are formed by inter-representational networks consisting of actors and artefacts. It places the network in the context of the system as a whole and focuses on the outcome of an inter-representational process. Actor Network Theory also mentions actors and artefacts, but focuses on the intentions and motivations of actors and the process of translation, and not necessarily on its outcome. Actor network theory brings actors and their actions into focus, with an emphasize on the structure of network itself.

When compared, the two theories differ in their emphasize on how to analyze and understand 'processes of becoming'. However, both theories seem to be describing the same kind of phenomenon: how (individual) actors find their ways to create action space or how actors influence society. In their different emphasize on process and outcome and network-structure and network-

system, the two theories complement each other in the analyses they propose. Both theories also underline the relation between social interactions and physical objects or spatial structures. In understanding the dynamics of neighbourhood regeneration, this relation reveals the impact social interactions have on the spatial conditions of a neighbourhood (for instance the quality of public space or real estate available for small scale companies). Both theories do not focus on institutional settings in the first place, but firstly on actors or agents and their interactions. In a setting in which actors operate apart from legal organized regimes or institutional settings, as is often the case in neighbourhood regeneration, these theories can help to understand these interactions, and later perhaps even incorporate these interactions in planning practice or institutional frameworks. Difference between the two proposed theories and current Dutch planning practice is that both Actor Network Theory as the theory of Inter-representational networks, emphasize the role of (f)actors the processes, instead of institutional boundaries and settings.

Self organization as governance style?

If Dutch planning practice strives after a successful transformation from a conceptualized and governmental planning practice towards a more development-oriented approach, a strong connection with already existing urban dynamics is needed. An approach like area development ('gebiedsontwikkeling') transforms Dutch planning into a project-based practice. In each area, in each case, issues are addressed specific for that particular case, and regimes between public and private parties are arranged around those cases. Current ideas on participation try to engage urban dynamics by involving civil society into planning procedures. However, these ideas on participation do either injustice to the temporal, changing and multiple character of present day civil society, or seem unable to incorporate actors operating apart from planning regimes or institutional settings.

As can be learned from processes of unslumming slums, development and transformations in cities are not only formed by legal organized regimes but by countless self-initiating (groups of) actors too. These groups are often not bounded to specific institutional settings. The new law on spatial planning (2008) in the Netherlands tries to underline the transformation in planning approach, but mainly structures planning issues towards levels of scale and governmental responsibility. However, networks, social interrelations or processes of interaction, are organized around issues with a specific meaning, apart from institutional boundaries, let alone specific levels of scale. Theories such as Actor Network Theory and Inter-representational Networks help to understand processes of self organization apart from institutional setting which define present day Dutch planning, by mainly focussing on social interactions and spatial impact. The notion of self organization contributes to connecting urban dynamics in the area addressed, using local characteristics, individual intentions, social interactions and network to planning practices.

As the intention for Dutch planning practice is to adapt to present day society with its complexity, fragmentation and multiplicity, the role of individuals in urban development deserves to be elaborated further. In the line of ideas that have appeared on planning in a complex and fragmented society, such as actor-oriented processes (BOELENS, 2006), democratic deliberation of strategic projects (SALET&GUALINI, 2007) and relational planning (GRAHAM&HEALEY, 1999), the notion of self organization could be an interesting following step for Dutch planning practice. However, the question is whether the Dutch

planning system (as defined in the new law on spatial planning) is capable of dealing with self organization as governance style?

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