Theorizing practice and practicing theory;

Outlines for an actor-relational-approach in planning

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Abstract

Not only in the Netherlands, but also elsewhere, a stalemate has occurred between modern and post-modern/post-structural planning, or between state-controlled and neo-liberal planning. The modernist, state-controlled planning is since at least the eighties fundamentally debunked as a highly regulatory and prescriptive operation, resulting in syrupy planning processes, very costly, inflexible and inefficient, even suppressing all new and creative initiatives, that do not fit within the framework set before. Postmodern and post-structural alternatives developed since then have been very effective in counter attacking the alleged virtues of that planning strategy, but less fruitful at promoting effective and/or sustainable practices. The article assumes that this has something to do with the fact that time and again these alternatives are still formulated from within the existing planning framework; from a specific governmental, or at least a government related view on planning: inside-out. From here, the article describes the possible outlines, for a practical outside-in, actor-relational-approach. It has been developed from experimental case studies in concrete planning practices, of which for instance the case study in Southern Limburg of the Netherlands. On the other hand it has also been derived from a fundamental interaction with behavioral, urban regime and actor-network theories, vice versa, evaluating the latter one extensively. The article concludes with a call for a new fundamental, but pro-active reassembling of spatial planning in an actor-oriented, instead of government-oriented way.

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Introduction

Something unusual seems to be going on in Dutch spatial planning. On the one hand, the international professional community has often regarded Dutch spatial planning system of high standards. For instance, Alterman (1997) had described the Netherlands as a country with *'one of the world's most successful systems of planning and land management'*. Peter Hall (1997) even claimed that the Netherlands had the *'worldwide lead'* in the coordination of spatial planning with traffic and transport planning. The Japanese Mori (1998) in his turn regarded the Netherlands as having a *'superbly efficient'* system of spatial planning and building production compared with the United Kingdom and Japan. The American Bolan (1999) was '*impressed by the spatial planning achievements'* of the Netherlands. And in Germany, reference was made to *'ein gut funktionierendes System der Baulandbereitstellung'* and *'ein geschickt ausgestaltetes Enteignungsrecht'* (Schmidt-Eichstaedt 1999). But what was it that made Dutch planning so attractive for these foreign scholars? Apparently and according to Andreas Faludi and Arnold van der Valk (1994) it had something to do with highly successful spatial concepts and planning strategies (such as the Randstad or the Green Heart), which were carefully constructed and maintained by the planners themselves. Moreover Dutch planners would have constructed a useful prescriptive institutional framework of national, provincial and local planning, which would sufficiently address how governments could pursue their policies in the face of mounting pressure. And finally, the system would have so much public and business support, that it could effectively coordinate the various (investment) strategies of the departments of housing, traffic, agriculture, economics, ecology and the like.

1

On the other hand, more than ten years before Faludi and van der Valk proudly

announced their *'Dutch Planning Paradise'*, the critical part of Dutch planning

profession itself spoke likewise of a fundamental crisis. Already as far back as the

early eighties, reference was made to the double failure of the future perspective of

modern planning, either to promote a human environment or to achieve an overall

vision coupled with a comprehensive social ideal (Bolte and Meijer 1981). Comments

were made about a remarkable proliferation of the planning institutions, coupled with

declining planning success (Wigmans 1982), about the superfluousness of urban

development and planning itself in the coordination of governments spatial policy (de

Jong 1985) and about the widening gap between planning and its implementation

(van der Cammen 1986). Partly in conjunction with the (post)modernity debate at that

time, the reality of Dutch urban planning was described as 'an early modern practice

through and through'. Following Jürgen Habermas, a call was issued for a

'completion of spatial planning and urban design' (Boelens 1990).

However, such a call turned out to be not so easy to realise in planning practice.

There were some experiments with regional design, in order to add local precision to

the more or less abstract strategic planning issues and render those things visible,

which could only be rendered visible by design (Taverne 1989). At this moment it is

executed again in the Strategic Spatial Structure Plan of Antwerp: *Antwerpen*

Ontwerpen (Designing Antwerp, Secchi/Vigano 2007). Next to that, some

experimented with a so-called 'layered approach' – addressing the different issues in

prioritizing layers of time and space to deal with contemporary complexity of

planning: first water management and ecology in a *'longue durée'*, then infrastructure

in a planning time span of 20-80 years, and finally dwelling with relatively fast

changes (Boelens 1993). The method was introduced in the Fifth White Paper on

Dutch Planning (VROM 2000-2001). And thirdly, others dealt with a kind of relational,

2

place bound planning (the casco-concept) in order to introduce more specific and

area dependent elements - as opposed to generic and comprehensive - into Dutch

planning (HNS 1998). It was for instance used in the price-winning 'Plan Ooievaar',

which opted for specific acupuncture interventions in order to stimulate a highly self-

organizing process of sustainable development. These ideas were also derived from

new theoretical planning perspectives at that time, like for instance the discursive or

collaborative planning (Dryzek 1990, Ines 1995, Healey 1997), entrepreneurial (Rast

2001, Sellers 2002) or smart growth approaches (Wiegand 1997, Smutney 1998).

But after few initial successes, the familiar regulatory, process-oriented planning

returned. The alternative approaches all failed to institutionalise sufficiently. At the

same time, profound neo-liberal changes occurred within public housing,

infrastructural and (agricultural) zoning policies, which permanently undermined the

traditional coordinating Dutch planning system based on linked interests between

these sectoral policies (Spit 1995, Dieleman et al. 1999). The malaise was expressed

in wider-ranging terms in the white paper 'Ruimtelijke ontwikkelingsplanologie'

(Spatial Development Planning) from the Scientific Council for Government Policy

(WRR 1999). Here the diminishing effectiveness of Dutch spatial planning was

attributed not just to the decreasing relevance of linked interests, but also to the rise

of the network society, the need for multi-level and multi-actor governance and the

changing, cross border dynamic (not only geographically, but also thematically)

between spatial developments within ongoing processes of globalization. It promoted

the need for a more active, development-oriented attitude, as opposed to the

traditional passive, permission-based attitude of the Dutch planning system.

In fact this plea was since than implemented within the governments policy with

regard tot the National Spatial Planning (Report on Space 2004-2006). Instead of

setting limitations (permission-based planning), the emphasis is put on stimulating

development (development-based planning) by primarily the government, with help of

1 other stake- and shareholders in the civic and business community. According to

2 Hans van der Cammen and Riek Bakker it is characterised by

3 *a)* an integrated approach to an area,

4 *b)* on the basis of a shared quality vision, in which

5 *c)* public, private and individual (i.e. public, business and civic society) supplement

6   and reinforce one another in co-production arrangements, with

7 *d)* explicit attention to financing.

8 Reference is made to the need for all participants to sense the urgency of achieving

9 development and for the equally great need for the partners to be able to build up a

10 long-term relationship of trust (v.d. Cammen 2006).

11

12 But it is precisely at this point that the model proves unconvincing. The exemplary

13 cases - put forward by van der Cammen and Bakker in consultation with the state

14 government and the provinces[1] - suggest a kind of compensation strategy. It is the

15 price paid - in ecology, nature or water - by a specific part of the private sector (e.g.

16 the project developers) to push through lucrative developments – housing, offices or

17 retail - of its own. Worse still, instead of demonstrating the lasting reinforcement of a

18 long-term structure or the core values of the areas in question, it gives rise to the

19 suspicion that it functions for the private party only as a kind of one-sided, temporary

20 trade-off. It provokes a kind of 'hit & run' mentality, with no sufficient exploitation,

21 management and durable involvement with the collaboration what so ever. Once the

22 project has been completed, the project developers have disappeared. Moreover,

23 after all, there is no reason to suppose that a subsequent and comparable public-

24 private 'compensation process' will be initiated in the same area again, with all the

25 feared muddle and fragmentation that it would entail. It is the folly of these

26 collaborative and smart growth proposals that weak (green) functions often lack

27 behind or are diminished in last instance. Like in the case described recently by

28 Patsy Healey (2007) – especially the South Axis of Amsterdam, but in my view also

the Milan Region and the East England Plan for Cambridgeshire – they remain often

the exclusive responsibility of the public parties, while the private parties go for the

more lucrative functions. Instead of the sustainable and win-win perspective they

advocate, the proposals remain therefore mostly government-driven or at least

government-initiated, self-fulfilling in itself.

New impulses in spatial planning

So where does Dutch spatial planning stand now? Although the 2008 financial crisis

puts old-fashioned governmental bravura back on the political agenda, it seems to

make no sense returning to the modernistic, visionary but prescriptive spatial

planning doctrines of the pre-eighties. To that end, the criticisms of the postmodernist

are too convincing: a central rule or process approach failed in the area of strategic

efficiency, comprehensiveness and 'emancipating knowledge interest'

(Adorno/Horkheimer 1947, Foucault 1969/1975, Feyerabend 1975, Lyotard 1979).

But on the other hand the subsequent promoted place-bounded, bottom-up

proposals in the course of regional design or casco planning (Bohigas 1987, Secchi

1989, HNS 1998), discursive or collaborative planning, the entrepreneurial or smart

growth approaches (Janssen-Jansen 2004) prove to be less effective at promoting

convincing practical alternatives. All these alternatives mostly stay focused on the

improvement of governmental planning, and coped with other private parties and

members of the civic society inside-out. But even back in the eighties social engaged

scholars already stressed that planning was not the sole, or even exclusive preserve

of government. Many other stake- and shareholders play an equal, if not greater role

in planning; and have done so throughout history (Kreukels 1985, De Klerk 1998). It

gave rise to a kind of 'behavourial science based approach', which derived its

principles, amongst others, also from Susan and Norman Fainsteins *Regime*

Strategies (1986), John Logans/Harvey Molotch's *Urban Fortunes* (1987) Clarence

1   Stones *Regime Politics* (1989) et al. It put stake- and shareholders of the business

2   and civic society as major planning actors themselves back on the agenda, although

3   it also remained very much analytical, implicit and not practically pro-active.

4

5   Against this background, the last five years a number of new modest and backstage

6   attempts are made in Dutch planning to deal with these behavioural ideas that a

7   multitude of leading actors can be involved, instead of excluded from, spatial

8   planning. Unlike the theoretical and/or primarily analytical views described earlier,

9   these attempts are actually derived from an intensive interchange between planning

10   practice and planning theory. They are actually backed up by real planning

11   interventions, trying to reframe strategies in order to attract new markets in a

12   sustainable way: *Heerlijkheid Heuvelland* (Hillside Delight, Limburg 2004-2005),

13   *Stedenbaan* (CitiesRail, Zuid-Holland 2006), *Nieuwe Vrije Tijd Amsterdam* (New

14   Leisure Amsterdam, Amsterdam 2006-2007), *Reframing South Limburg* (Zuid

15   Limburg 2007), *Nieuwe Markten voor het Brabants Land* (New Markets for the

16   countrydside of Brabant, 2007-2008), *Terug naar de kust* (Back to the coast, Zeeland

17   2008), *Integrated Care Communities* (Orbis 2008) etc. However, on the other hand,

18   these interventions did not operate only in practical circumstances. There was an

19   intense input and inspiration of parallel case studies and analysis based on

20   connecting behavioral, urban regime and governance theories, vice versa. In fact

21   they became theorized practices and/or practiced theories, and by doing so evolving

22   step-by-step, almost incrementally, towards a new kind of actor-relational approach.

23   In this contribution, I will explain how that worked. So what I want to do here is

24   •   firstly, to outline the basics features and motives of these new impulses,

25   •   secondly, to link them not only to existing ideas with regard to behavioural

26   planning approaches, but also to the more ontological, Actor Network Theory,

27   •   thirdly, to outline where the presented new impulses take their own stand in these

28   debates, resulting in a new model for planning action,

1 • fourthly, to present a case how it worked out with regard to a specific planning

2   issue in the South of the Netherlands (South-Limburg) and

3 • finally to wrap up the arguments in an outline for a trans-modern approach,

4   beyond the ineffective dialectics between state-focused and neo-liberal planning.

5

6 **Basic features of an actor-relational view of planning**

7 Theoretically, the starting-point of the new impulses mentioned above, has thus been

8 the need to get around the impasses between modernism and post-modernism.

9 Because neither a reversion to the supposed absolute accuracy of big visions and

10 holism, nor an emphasis on the day-to-day, the here and now and fragmentary

11 projects represents a promising course for the practice and science of planning

12 (Boelens 1990). At the same time, the resulting communicative, interactive and

13 collaborative approaches are seen as too idealistic or centred around traditional

14 processes to actually play a significant role in actual planning (Boelens et al 2000).

15 Instead, the approaches of the urban and regional regime methodology, and the

16 behavioural approach are being taken seriously, along with the critiques that have

17 been formulated about them in recent years. An attempt is being made to bring these

18 into line with one another in a kind of 'actor-relational approach' so that they become

19 both effective in reality and justifiable in theory (Mommaas/Boelens 2005).

20

21 The central theme of this kind of 'actor-relational-approach' is first of all an attempt to

22 **develop beyond 'the plan'**. Instead of present-day revisionistic approaches focusing

23 on 'a plan that works' (e.g. Hajer/Sijmons 2006), the actor-relational approach does

24 not focus on a particular plan or a particular formal institution as the given central

25 objective, respectively subjective. A behavioural actor-relational view (Boelens, Spit,

26 Wissink 2006) demands a prominent role for a more neutral moderator and an open

27 medium to sketch opportunities. The focus is turned around: outside-in instead of

inside-out. The point is not to formulate an objective, vision or plan, which then has to

be implemented in trade-offs, whether or not in a public-private partnership, but to

identify possible actors, stake- and shareholders who may be ready to associate and

invest around common opportunities, possibilities and/or themes from the ground up.

Secondly, the approach is not about actors as such, in the broad sense of interactive

planning (all affected parties), but about **leading actors**, who are primarily

encountered in the human world of action. The symmetrical perspective of discourse

analysis is rejected, as in planning practice, because it will lead to process overkill

and insufficient value-adding consultation. The definition of those 'leading or focal

actors' is - in line with the evolutionary economic and urban sociological approach

(De Langen 2003, Yeung 2005, Boschma/Frenken 2006) - 'those actors who have

the capacity and incentive to invest in their local environment, doing so, moreover, for

reasons of more or less self-interest'. Here we distinguish between leading actors

within the *business society* (with primarily focus on profit-making), within the *public

society* (with primarily focus on representational vote-winning) and within the *civic

society* (with primarily focus on specific partnership-interests). Although they have

thus various focal points, we shall see it is also possible to coincide their interests on

specific planning items. The more coinciding, the more durable it will be. Moreover, it

is acknowledged that the focus on *leading* actors also introduces a certain power

connotation or subjectivity into this actor-relational approach. But in principle this is

always the case, even with the seemingly more symmetrical communicative,

collaborative and discursive approaches (see for instance *'Die Diktatur des

Sitzfleisches'*, Weinrich 1987). Furthermore this evolutionary approach always

departs from embedded actors in broad networks of economic, political and civic

interconnectivity; and need therefore base their dominance on that interconnectivity.

Thirdly, the concept of **sustainability** in particular is central to this actor-relational

approach, but in a complex sense. It refers equally to sustainable economic (i.e.

profit-generating) solutions, sustainable social (i.e. broadly supported) solutions,

sustainable spatial (i.e. well embedded from an evolutionary viewpoint) solutions and

sustainable environmental (i.e. climate-neutral) solutions, etc. (Mommaas 2006). The

commonly discerned unique core values or unique selling points of a specific

landscape, port design, social community, spatial constellation, etc. are included not

as a trade-off – as in the smart growth approach – but as meaningful, dominant

(f)actors of mutual concern, that as such, constantly enjoy a central position in the

actor-relational-approach. In fact, they become the central focal points, against which

the planning associations are continually measured in terms of their objectives,

development and results.

Fourthly, the actor-relational-approach also has a primary focus **beyond the
confines of government**. In line with the urban and regional regime approach, this

arises from the conviction that the model of the welfare state or representative

democracy does not work, or has seen better days (Stoker 1994, Pierre 2000, Purcell

2008), as well as from the conviction that the government is not the only actor within

spatial planning, and often not even the dominant one (Kreukels/Van Vliet 2001).

Moreover, it is concluded that a lasting emphasis on central government negotiations

leads to planning that lacks sustainability and is depending on, for example,

subsidies or more and more volatile political commitment (Mommaas/Boelens 2005).

Accordingly, in actor-relational practice a search is conducted from the start for

commissioning bodies in the private or semi-private/semi-public sphere, in order to

circumvent these problems. Of course, the government always has an important

framework-setting or facilitating role. But this does not take away the fact that

–especially in the Netherlands – we have to put first and for all extra focus on the

specific embeddedness of actor-relational actions by and through stakeholders in the

business and civic society.

Finally the actor-oriented approach is also **associative** through and through. This

primarily consists of building effective actor-network associations around meaningful

things, themes or issues as a starting-point, working method and objective. But it also

ultimately ties in with the plea for an associative democracy made by Cohen, Rogers,

Hirst and Bader and others (Cohen/Rogers 1992, Hirst 1994, Hirst/Bader 2001).

Instead of, or preferably alongside, the representative social democracy, but also

instead of neo-liberal economically oriented regimes, this associative democracy sets

out from the conviction *'that individual liberty and human welfare are both best*

served, when as many of the affairs of society as possible are managed by voluntary

and democratically self-governing associations' (Hirst 1994, p.19). In their terms

associative democracy therefore has two distinguishing characteristics compared

with all other possible forms of state:

1) it bridges the widening gap between the state and civic and business society and

   transforms it into a situation that is actually more workable by *'pluralising'* the

   former and making the latter more *public and transparent* and

2) it seeks to promote the democratic governance of collective entities in both public

   and private spheres by offering, instead of hierarchical management, a bottom-up

   model of organisational self-efficiency (Cohen/Rogers 1992, Hirst 1994).

Actor Network Theory and beyond

As such, and although it had been developed pragmatic within certain concrete

planning practices, the Actor-Relational-Approach (ARA) also evolved very close to

many features of the Actor-Network-Theory (ANT), with which Callon, Law and

Latour have recently created a considerable furore (Callon & Latour 1981, Latour

1993, Callon 1995, Law 2004, Latour 2005). Because, ARA also starts off with actors

and relations (or networks) – not only amongst each other but also between the

human actors and the specific characteristics and entities of the locality - in order to

1   reassemble them in such a way that they would become more innovative,

2   enforceable and associative. On the other hand, it does have some deviant

3   characteristics too. I will explain that later. Because ARA and ANT agree that

4   technical, social or spatial artefacts are not outside or opposed to society, but are in

5   fact the results of it. ANT argues that the world is made up of heterogeneous

6   networks of actors (Bos 2004). Or, as Latour puts it: *'sociology is best defined as the*

7   *discipline where participants explicitly engage in reassembling the collective'* (Latour

8   2005, p. 247). Not only is every (social) action thus fundamentally relational, it can

9   also only occur as a consequence of the specific connection between people, entities

10   and resources concerned. At the same time, those people, entities and resources

11   only have a meaning in networks (Law 1986). Or, in other words: *"What there is and*

12   *how it is divided up should not be assumed beforehand. Instead it arises in the*

13   *course of interactions between different actors......... Actors are entities, human or*

14   *otherwise, that happen to act. They are not given, but they emerge in relations."* (Law

15   2004, p. 102). Here – and this is possibly the most controversial assumption – ANT

16   assumes that there exists in principal symmetry between objects and subjects,

17   nature and sociology, the human and the non-human. It cannot be presumed in

18   advance who or what is most important for the action: a person, an entity or a

19   resource. For example, relevant people could reach agreement about a plan, or all

20   the elements to put a plan into practice could be present, but there may still exist

21   insufficient financial resources available. In this case, no action or actor-network

22   association will arise. However, ANT claims that it is possible for a specific actor

23   subsequently to become more dominant than others, by seducing actors to behave

24   according to its own prerogatives. In the given example, the people may involve other

25   people with more money to enable the plan to be put into practice, or the limited

26   financial resources may give rise to a less ambitious plan, less elements involved

27   and hence to an adapted link between the people and entities. This is in principle

28   what ANT calls 'the translation of the objectives, limitations and opportunities of other

actors' so that these can start 'behaving' to their own accord, but in line with the

wishes/characteristics of the dominant actor; in ANT-terms 'the actant'. (Latour

1997). Thus as a result, this actant – who/which dominates or organises the

association or network – may consist for ANT of either human or non-human entities.

As such, the concept spans all rationally attributed differences between (conscious)

subjects and (passive) objects, culture and nature, the technical and the social, the

modern and the post-modern. It is not *'a sociology of the social, but a sociology of*

associations' (Latour 2005 p. 9) in all kinds of assemblages between human, non-

human and even lifeless entities.

Although the actor-network-theory may thus be characterised as a form of

sociological epistemology, or perhaps even as a new *'a-modern monistic ontology'*

(Latour 1993), the actor-network theoreticians have also commented on space and

the planning of space. Thus Jonathan Murdoch can refer to *'notions of space in a*

Latourian actor-network theory' (Murdoch 2006 p. 73). Crucial elements of such

notions are that there exists no absolute time-space – just as there is neither

absolute nature nor society – but only specific time-space configurations, which are

conditioned by motives and relations in networks. The attribution of any significance

to scale or any idea of micro- or macro-issues is in fact superseded. In principle, one

ought rather to follow the actors, or better still the actor-networks, which condition

specific time-space frames in the way they do. The point here is not to analyse

specific places within specific times. Instead, geography (and its application,

planning) becomes the science or skill of the analysis (and/or planning) of

heterogeneous associations or actor-networks in time and space. Spatial relations

are reduced to network relations and spatial planning is understood as a process of

network building in which entities of various kinds are assembled in ways that allow

networks to undertake certain functions (Murdoch 1997). Even more strikingly, on the

basis of his famous case study looking at improvements in scallop cultivation

1   methods on the Normandy coast, Michel Callon actually distinguishes four steps in

2   the translation of actor-networks (Callon 1986):

3   *1. Problematization*

4   What is the issue, which requires a solution? Who are the relevant actors? Can

5   spokespeople be identified who can represent specific groups?

6   *2. Interest*

7   Can these relevant actors be interested in the solution to the issue? What 'terms

8   of commitment' are there, and/or how can they be convinced that their own

9   interests will be served?

10   *3. Enrolment*

11   How can these common interests be converted into potential associations? Do

12   the different actors also accept their role, or can they be geared to the available

13   resources?

14   *4. Mobilisation of allies*

15   Is there wide support for the expected outcomes? Do the spokespeople actually

16   represent their respective constituencies effectively, or how can the actor-network

17   association be embedded in a wider setting?

18

19   Thus ANT appears at first sight to offer attractive prospects for contemporary spatial

20   planning. The pitfalls of the (post)modernity debate are elegantly circumvented, by

21   assuming neither the need for alternative thinking as a matter of principle (Foucault

22   1968), nor the need for an emphasis on the small discourses, the so-called

23   *'micrologies'* (Lyotard 1979) nor an absolute desirability of a structure, holism or

24   political interest imposed from the top or from the outside (Frieling 1987 et al).

25   Instead, the focus is put on the actors themselves, especially those who are capable,

26   in networks, of developing meaningful spatial connections – albeit heterogeneous

27   ones. At the same time, it sidesteps the stifling duality between macro and micro.

28   Because the presumptions *'think global, but act local'*, its converse or even its

contamination *'glocal'* (McLuhan 1964, Drewe 1997, Swyngedouw 2004) do not

really add anything new to our operational spatial knowledge. In principle, according

to ANT, the actor-network associations in this network society cut right across

different levels and layers. And finally, ANT offers a subtle extension to the

discursive, entrepreneurial or growth management approaches, by also including

things and entities as autonomous (not passive) forces or (f)actors of importance.

The environment, the landscape, the cultural and historical heritage, the unique

fauna and flora etc. can indeed assume a structuring or even dominant role of their

own in actor-network oriented planning.

ANT critiques

Even so, ANT comes in for fierce criticism from many theoreticians on the grounds

that it incorrectly assumes a symmetrical *tabula rasa* between the relevant (human

and non-human) actors, that there is in fact always a certain (inherent) power

discrepancy in evidence, that it confuses science as a research subject and as an

authoritative source, and the like (Bijker 1995, Hagendijk 1996 etc.). Law, Callon and

Latour have reacted to these critiques in numerous polemics, and in this way

improved and refined certain aspects of ANT (Callon/Law 1997, Latour 2005).

Nevertheless, I continue to maintain three serious objections with respect to the

present subject of enquiry – planning.

At first sight ANT stands out – like so many post-structuralist and post-modern

planning analyses, incidentally – mainly for its analytical power. In all analyses and

case studies, the main focus is on how things have got this way and how they work,

not on how we can make them better and under which conditions. On the contrary,

the actor-network theorists are very much reluctant and cautious to take any

normative, pro-active stance (see for instance the Interlude in Latour 2005, pp. 141-

156). Even Callon's multi-step scheme is based on a contemplative, albeit

operational analysis of the phases in the cultivation of scallops, and finishes at step 4

(mobilisation of allies), without providing further concrete detail in subsequent steps

about the implementation. For a proactive skill and science such as planning, this is

an insuperable shortcoming. Because the point here is not just to survey and analyse

plans, but also to facilitate or ensure improvements, execute and implement them,

which then in turn, incidentally, changes the composition of affected actors and their

networks. The actors, networks and their actions - i.e. the stake- and shareholders,

their specific (institutional) organisations, and the featured planning strategies - form

an essential, indispensable triple classification for planning (Wissink 2007).

Secondly – and partly related to the first point – it is difficult to assign a comparable

proactive value within planning to non-human and/or non-living entities as to

conscious, possibly negotiating human subjects. Of course the climate or

environment, the landscape and specific planning concepts, likewise functions such

as housing, cars, stations, the available budget, materials, instruments etc., are

significant *f*actors of importance. And it is correct that they should be involved in

spatial actor-network associations at a far earlier stage. But in actual negotiations or

the proactive formation of specific associations, they tend to be involved in a

mediated form, via their representatives. The environment or the climate, the existing

cultural heritage, available budget does not actually sit at the negotiating planning

tables or on the planning forums itself. At best, the representatives and spokesmen

of the environmental movement or those troubled by 'an inconvenient truth', cultural

deprivation, wasted money etc. bring in their interests. In ANT terminology, these

things or non-human entities can therefore rather be proactively classified as

intermediaries (who convey meaning without doing anything about it) or preferably as

mediators (who convey meaning, but at the same time change, add or adjust

something) (Latour 2005). Proactively, however, they can scarcely be regarded as

leading actors, only as mediated *f*actors of importance.

Thirdly, even in ANT, democratic legitimacy is still not a point of concern. It is true that Callons fourth step is aimed at broadening support for the planned actor-network association, or for ensuring sufficient communication about the planned action with the public, but how this ought to be guaranteed and how the specific actor-network associations can be embedded in a broader setting, ANT does not say in so many words. Yet this too is crucial for planning, because even the smallest, most marginal actions of planners often involve surprising and unexpected effects and interests. Likewise, planning should – in view of its long-term orientation – keep sight of the interests of those who are not yet born and those who cannot be addressed. Actor-networks 'in the blind', these are called, mainly consisting of what Latour characterises as '*the background plasma, namely that which is not yet formatted, not yet measured, not yet socialized and not yet engaged in metrological chains*' (Latour 2005), as well as that which is still *in statu nascendi*. Probably that's why Louis Albrechts, amongst others, calls for permanent *'performance monitoring and quality care'* (Albrechts 2003, cited in Hillier 2007 p. 307). Although his Structure Plan of Flanders view is – whilst consumer and stakeholder sensitive – still highly government-focused, inside-out also.

New practical and theoretical impulses

In any case, partly in reference to these more or less theoretical reflections and partly in a somewhat incremental, learn-as-you-go manner, the following seven-step operational working scheme has been developed in the course of theorizing practice or practicing theories. After the planning issue has been formulated or the problem has appeared (in ANT terms the so-called perplexity or problematization phase) this seven step scheme may receive its own interpretation and elaboration for each case

1 (postmodern), but has nonetheless already demonstrated its effectiveness for a

2 variety of themes and planning issues, with varying success (modern):

3

4 *1. Interpreting the problem by determining the focal actors and unique core values*

5 The first step consists of a) the identification of the primary problem- or stake-

6 holder(s) and b) an analysis and joint determination of a region's, an issue's or an

7 entity's unique core features. The last ones we can call the focal factors of

8 importance. This step is fundamental, as planning issues are still sometimes

9 formulated without clear focal (f)actors; not only in the public, but especially in the

10 business and civic society. Moreover, these unique core values and their

11 incorporation by these actors – not least on the basis of self-interest – will have

12 the effect of imparting meaning to the whole of the subsequent planning process.

13 Should such unique core values or focal actor(s) not be present (not only in the

14 public, but mainly in the business and civic society), then in a relative sense and

15 in ANT terms, the controversy and the planning issue are non-existent. However,

16 we do not rule out the possibility that in a specific case, with a view to possible

17 future stakeholders, the government may still decide to approach the issue as an

18 exclusively matter for government attention. But in view of the requirement for

19 broad sustainability described earlier, it should only be considered in last

20 instance, after other options have proved unworkable.

21

22 *2. Actor identification and actor analysis*

23 After the unique core values and any controversies about them have been

24 settled and (civic/business/public) focal actors have internalised them, the next

25 step is the identification of other possible leading actors (actants) who feel

26 connected or contented with these core values, or who see new chances and

27 possibilities for themselves. They may be actants who live, spend time or work

28 within the locality, or who seem to have some fundamental involvement with the

issue in question. However, actants who view the planning issue from a distance, or indeed far stretched, may also be involved. The only criterion here is, if those actants are able and willing to act like a leading actor, in accordance with the definition given earlier. This is consistent with the view that actor-network associations and hence the actor-relational-approach cut across the different scale levels, sectors and institutionalised fields of expertise. Innovation often emerges precisely from these crossovers. Moreover, identification occurs on the basis of a careful analysis of the internal motives, objectives and drives of the actants concerned. All kinds of resources may be used for this analysis, including ethnographical or anthropological studies, economic surveys based on annual reports and historic development, socio-cultural studies of past behaviour, etc., where necessary supplemented with bilateral talks.

3. Opportunity maps and developmental possibilities

The third step consists of compiling opportunity maps and/or developmental possibilities on the basis of the analysed internal motives and drives of the identified focal and other actants, with a view to the conservation, reinforcement or harnessing of the unique core values of the issue or region concerned. In principle, we suggest that all available urban development and planning instruments should be used here: preliminary research and analysis, rough draft, elaboration of detail and plan proposals, cost/benefit analyses, appropriate regulations and jurisprudence, attractive designs, 3-D models, photo manipulation, films etc. The only criterion is that instead of the tracing surveys in step 1, these need to be pro-active, future oriented proposals, enticing and convincing, to secure the commitment of the identified actants. It is here, then, that the professionalism of the urban development experts and planners will really need to come into play. As well as extending their expertise, which is often confined to a few sets of instruments, they will also need to become proficient in

communication skills. Often, these opportunity maps are therefore created in a team setting.

4. Bilateral talks and round tables

The next step is then to discuss the opportunity maps compiled in this way in bilateral, trilateral and small round table discussions involving, something between 5 and 15 people. In principle, this is where the focal and other actants first come face to face. The objective is to see how far the compiled opportunity map, illlustrating the course of development, meets expectations, and whether a willingness to invest (and to distribute roles in this respect) can be achieved. This is the first real test of the process, because the actual amount of interest is often revealed from this indication of willingness to invest. Investment is interpreted here in a broad sense; money, expertise, manpower, the promotion of commitment etc. (with reference to the stakeholders in the business, civic and public society). However, extensive talks often bring to light a distinction between so-called pullers and pushers. Pullers take the initiative and are often more active and enthusiastic about elaborating an opportunity map further in accordance with their own and surrounding viewpoints (according tot the identification of leading actors), whereas pushers, partly in view of their status and/or orientation, take a somewhat more passive, more facilitating and/or more 'wait and see' approach. Even so, the actor-network-association, which could be established over here, is the basis for the rest of the process. Where necessary, the opportunity map is adapted accordingly.

5. Business cases and pilots

Step 4 was about a first possibility of developing new opportunities, which may be endorsed, but still need to be proved in reality. To this end, step five is the proof of the pudding; the associated opportunity map is put into concrete form in

1   one or more business cases, respectively pilots for specific project components.

2   This is the second real test of the process, as the ultimate division of roles is now

3   determined far more concretely. Where necessary a contract sets out what each

4   actant is prepared to invest and when, and/or where and to what extent the

5   backing of representative constituencies is guaranteed. Each actant will undergo

6   his/her own internal weighing-up and decision-making process in this regard. But

7   it is precisely here that the project's make or break point lies. If there is failure at

8   this point, it will be hard to come back to discussing the identified core values

9   again in a hurry, but if there is success it often turns out that there are further

10   implications and even spin-offs in other areas. This means that the project may

11   have far broader effects and associations than originally expected.

12

13   *6.   Regime development and general plan outlines*

14   If the previous step has led to a range of successful and promising cases, the

15   next question is whether it is possible to achieve project-transcending spatial

16   added value that corresponds to the unique core values of the issue or region in

17   question. We use the term 'regime' for this concept, referring to the broader and

18   durable planning networks described in Fainsteins urban regime theories.

19   Whether this is initiated by the original focal actor, or another dominant

20   stakeholder, consideration is given to the reinforcing potentials of the separate

21   cases, or the mutual inducement of some form of mutual project-transcending

22   planning strategy. This must primarily be done with a view to enhance the value

23   of the cases and projects as such. It amounts to the old planners holism, but not

24   for its own sake or on the basis of an absolute concept of space, but on the basis

25   of the cases and the related actor-network associations. If the focal actor or other

26   public-private actants succeed here, the foundations are laid for a new,

27   sustainable spatial regime, ready to adapt to changing circumstances. Expressed

28   even more strongly, the spatial reality is again redefined and the unique core

1   values from the relevant region re-confirmed, re-strengthened or re-developed.

2

3   *7.   Democratic anchoring in special district*

4   As a final step it is then necessary to see how far this new spatial

5   development regime can be anchored in associative democracies. Partly in

6   reference to an adaptive and improved model of the special district planning in

7   the USA[2], the focus here is not on elaborating a generic representative

8   democracy. In accordance to Hirst, Cohen and others, this step focuses on

9   parallel made-to-measure democratic organisations to which the affected

10   households, businesses and institutions can affiliate of their own free will.

11   Because they will benefit from it by doing so. These organisations can also raise

12   financial resources themselves and/or demand membership fees, set public rules,

13   formulate a programme for a specific project and appoint an authority, which

14   could be held accountable for its achievements and revenues at periodic

15   intervals. It is regarded not as an alternative but as a supplement to the current

16   centrally organised institutions and representative democracy. Here however,

17   many spatial questions are left to voluntary democratic organisations; more so

18   than is currently the case, especially in the Netherlands. From the political

19   viewpoint, this fits more closely with the ambition of the current National Report

20   on Spatial Planning: *'do what has to be done centrally, but leave what could be*

21   *done decentralised'* (VROM 2004-2006)

22

23 The key difference vis-à-vis a run-of-the-mill government taskforce or the cooperative

24 public-private-ventures critiqued earlier, is that it focuses itself from the beginning

25 outside-in, instead of inside-out. It starts not from a governmental viewpoint about

26 planning, nor the need for a periodic renewal of existing plans. On the contrary, it

27 starts from a problematization ventured by stake- and shareholders in the business

28 and/or civic society themselves. Moreover space (and its proactive facilitator:

1 planning) is here not considered as a container, but as an assemblage, which

2 emerges step by step in relation between actors and factors of importance. Next to

3 that – and instead of the discursive or pure actor-network approach – it starts with

4 leading actors, defined as those actors with the capacity and incentive to invest in

5 their local environment, and therefore being embedded in the interest of other

6 networks and institutions, out of pure self-interest. I will explain this in more detail in

7 the case below. Because, especially those planning interventions seem to be most

8 successful and/or durable, which are able to facilitate an intensive coinciding of the

9 leading actor interests of the involved business, civic and public society in innovative

10 cross-overs, embedded in unique local features. These interventions could be the

11 basis for democratic self-organizing associations in sustainable regimes (in broad

12 economic, ecologic, spatial, social etc. terms) and special districts of self-

13 organization around specific themes and proposals.

14

15 **The case 'Hillside Delights' South-Limburg (2004-2008)[3]**

16

17 *Problematization*

18 Since 2004 these evolving ideas about an actor-relational-approach have been in

19 some ways constituted by and been structuring for a specific planning puzzle in

20 South Limburg. It is the only region in the south of the Netherlands, which has hills

21 over 300 meters above sea level (see figure 1). Therefore, from the early start of

22 tourism in the post-war area, this region became a major vacation area for the Dutch.

23 After the end of coal mining in the early seventies, it became even one of the main

24 economic sectors of South Limburg. Its 20,000 laborers nowadays contribute to

25 nearly 10% of the total employment of the region and almost to 20% of the gross

26 regional product (Province of South Limburg 2008). Moreover it has a major social

27 impact, because the sector is embedded in the social structure through its human-

scale, hospitable and small-family structure. However, since the nineties, especially

after the advent of Low Cost Carriers, the market of South Limburg for domestic and

foreign tourism dropped dramatically. At the same time, as a result of the diminishing

subsidies of the EU-government, the small-scale farming in the area went through

hard times as well. It evoked a process of economies of scale in both the agricultural,

and the tourist sector, accompanied by a degradation of the rural and urban

environment and the regional quality of leisure. In turn, this resulted in a further

decline in tourist stays. A continuing negative spiral was established. That was the

reason for businesses, main stakeholders in the Limburg civic society and protectors

of the environment and cultural heritage to act together and consider how this

negative spiral could be redirected in an upward direction again. It was facilitated by

the Limburg Development and Investment Company (NV Industry LIOF), backed up

by the EU program *TouriSME*, who granted the contract to a consortium of planners,

leisure experts and two affiliated universities to develop a sustainable new markets

perspective, in order to give a new boost to both an economic development in the

area, as to the preservation of the landscape and cultural heritage. This was

managed according to the actor-relational approach described before.

Actants-identification

In accordance with that program, the consortium started its work in an effort to

determine the unique selling points of the region. Various (map and field) surveys

were carried out to discover that the region, in comparison to its surroundings, could

be characterized by large concentrations of therapists and wellness facilities, high-

quality restaurants, beautiful square-farms and well situated castles, with an

extensive catholic religious heritage, residual watermills and extensive hike and bike

trails and a fine tourist car network. These more or less urban and/or cultural

highlights are bountiful flanked with not only the present hills and gentle stream

valleys, but also beautiful wooded slopes, with fruit trees, gardens and 'hollow roads'

in an imaginative small-scale setting. One of the researchers even claimed that 'if

Walt Disney would have had to invent a landscape of his own, South Limburg would

have been it.' Next to that an overall analysis and referential study was developed to

discover potential new markets for the area in applicability and momentum, to

stimulate a combination of embedded market value and local qualities. These

combination of the different themes resulted in some preliminary sketches of possible

opportunities: *Magnificent Gardens* (Retail with and around Castle Gardens), *Linked*

Fields (informative WIFI facilitated by the extensive catholic heritage network),

Healing Hills (care & cure with leisure), *Elementary Heritage* (New energy with

Industrial Heritage), *Taste cooperative* (Agri-leisure and Slow Food) and *Style Traffic*

(New, sustainable leisure mobility, see figure 2). On this basis, potential leading

actors were identified, according to an additional analysis of their year reports,

ambitions and motives. These concerned potential investors from both inside as

outside the area, and - in line with previous definitions - actors from the business and

from the civic society, which could be interested in investing in these local

surroundings in broad terms and by pure self-interest. By motivated reasons (to

prevent traditional planning situations en dependencies) the regular actors within the

public society were for the moment passed by.

Bilateral talks, Opportunity Maps and Round Tables

Subsequently, various bilateral talks were organized with the identified, potentially

interested leading actors; investors, project developers, tourist entrepreneurs, other

businessman, retailers, agrarians, representatives of interest groups etc. It resulted in

the conclusion that some of the proposals lacked sufficient support (eg. *Magnificent*

Gardens, Linked Fields, Elementary Heritage and *Style Traffic*), others were

embraced and expanded (eg. *Healing Hills* and *Taste Cooperative*), while other

issues were even added by the interviewees, enthusiastically stimulated by the

initiative; such as *Wellness in Luxury* (wellness facilities extended with sport, multi-

media and health food) and *Glorious Life* (integrated pension communities preserving cultural heritage and beautiful landscapes, figure 3). Opportunity maps were created for each of these embraced themes, referring to both the distinct, unique selling points of the region, and the possible new and sustainable features of the future. They were discussed in five round tables with the identified and potentially leading actors on each of those themes. Especially the theme *Healing Hills* (a crossover between health care, leisure and landscape) and *Taste Cooperation* (a crossover between the agricultural sector, agri-leisure, gourmet restaurants and retail) came to the fore as key issues involving a large readiness for a comprehensive and sustainable investment. At that time (spring 2005) the consortium presented its first report of the results and recommendations, for a full LIOF meeting of circa 50 stakeholders in the business and civic society, including those of the public society for the first time.

Business cases and pilots

The report and presentations received enthusiastic support. Especially because the proposals were specific, (partly) derived from the ambitions of the leading actors themselves, put in a new and creative setting of innovative crossovers, which promised mutual value adding in both an economic, tourist, social, as spatial and ecologic perspective. Already during the meeting, involved stakeholders agreed to elaborate the most promising opportunity charts in real business cases.

The first concerned a proposal for recovering-holidays as part of the theme *Healing Hills* (figure 4). The intention was to move patients after surgery as soon as possible to one of the hotels in the local area to recover under daily supervision of hospital nurses (and doctors at distance). In this way the hospital would profit, because it could decimate its waiting lists, as well as offer an attractive care & cure program for patients from outside the region. It is cheaper for the health insurance company, since a hotel bed is less expensive than a hospital bed. And at last, it is lucrative for

the innkeeper, because hotel occupancy is also guaranteed off-season. One agreed

that part of the surplus profit should be used for improvements in the surrounding

countryside. At present several three-star-packages (free for patient and partner) and

one five-star-package (free for patients, with an additional payment of partner) are

offered by a coalition of Orbis Medical Service Provider, Camille Oostwegel Chateau

Hotels, Heuvelland Hotels and several health insurance companies.

The second business case concerned the delivery of a highbrow daily fresh-food-

market in the inner city of Maastricht, with particular focus on the sale and promotion

of the regional agricultural production. The market should also give a boost to

regulate the entire chain from production, via distribution and retail to consumer more

efficiently. At the same time, the fresh-food-market should also serve as a kind of

front-office for the related agrarians, who, in addition to their farming, want to offer

new attractions with regard to regional cooking, dining and residence. This was

combined with the periodically tasting event *Fine Food Fair*, with a presentation of

the star-cooks in and around the region. It offered a new (economic) perspective for

the preservation of the small-scale agricultural production in the region.

Regional regime

The two pilots and especially the resulting boost in the area were so catchy that it

also led to many new cases on issues such as *Wellness in Luxury* (including a Spa

Boulevard Valkenburg), *Glorious Life* (including, for example, the development of

integrated care communities in the western mining region of the area) and even a

restoration of the initial ideas on a region-wide wireless network: *Linked Fields*

(including the project *My Limburg*). It resulted in a comprehensive network of,

whether or not interconnected, projects and stakeholders (see figure 3). From here

on, the leading actors themselves - linked in the so-called *Zwarte Ruiteroverleg*

(*Black Horseriders Talk*, named after the cafe where they periodically met) – felt the

need to develop and promote the various projects in a more jointly profile. Upon

request, this was partly also facilitated by the aforementioned consortium. Moreover,

in order to gain greater support and a more sustainable regime alliance, the

operation was directly linked to the more industrial, high tech and educational

innovations, facilitated by the provincial innovation agenda in the area; like for

instance *Life Tech A2* (including r&d alliances between Philips, Medtronic, University

Maastricht et al), *Chema-Energy Valley* (including new alliances between DSM,

Solland, Sabic et al) and Health Valley Campus (including the cooperation of the

cardiology departments of the University Medical Centers of Maastricht and Aachen).

It resulted in a broad image of the region, with respect to

a) life tech innovation and production,

b) quality gastronomy and leisure,

c) a caring and healing living environment,

d) of small-scale european character:

In sum *High Life Hills* (figure 5)*.*

That commitment has by now been transformed into a broad regional private-public

branding project, which includes at this moment approximately 40 stakeholders from

the business and civic society and 20 from the public society, with actual participating

investments (see www.maastrichtregion.com).

Associating in special districts

Last but not least, some elements of that regime are being anchored and

institutionalized within the Limburg society in a more innovative way. Here one can

refer to the impact of the integrated care project, which is now being elaborated by

the Orbis Medical Care Concern in cooperation with alternating partners. The original

objective is to offer attractive alternatives for the current migration of elderly people to

Mediterranean countries. Orbis opts for various markets: rich and middleclass, health

care or health guaranteed settings, in a social more open urban context or in a more

rural, familiar social setting. To compensate the disadvantages of the cold climate in

northwest Europe, extra attention is given to high quality (care and other) services,

integrated in a high quality historical and cultural landscape setting. The aim is to

actually invest in the development and/or preservation of that environment. To that

end, next to the completely renewed Orbis Medical Park, six integrated care projects

for corresponding six markets, are now being developed in an intensive coalition

between Orbis, other (care) providers, investors, developers, housing corporations,

leisure retailers, landscape and culture foundations (see figure 6). The goal is an

Integrated Care Community (ICC), in which involved habitants no longer give their

contribution to health insurance companies, but directly to Orbis and the related

health care providers. In turn, they provide adequate and specific care & cure.

Avoiding too much overhead, some savings can be made, which are then used to

realize extra services, such as gardening, repairing, crèche, after-school services,

food and mail delivery services, free taxi or car-sharing services etc. The ICC's would

then also attract younger and double income families, while they would profit from a

stress-free living environment. In this way gated or single-issue communities are

being avoided. On the other hand, with the direct premium payment of care services,

one opts to a greater accountability and democratic involvement of the residents in

the quality, size and type of the services delivered. As a result it promotes not only a

greater alignment of supply and demand, but also a better bonding of the residents,

with hopefully ongoing voluntary work and self-organization on the long run. In fact, a

new kind of special care district would than be institutionalized.

Conclusions: the long road out of planning paradise

Dutch 'planning paradise' is a pain in the neck. Although international scholars pay

tribute to Dutch planning, seemingly embodying a kind of successful version of a

highly regulatory, prescriptive, coordinating and visionary planning system, it has

always appeared to me more of a burden than a pleasure. Because Dutch planning

is mostly a highly regulatory and prescriptive operation, resulting in syrupy planning

processes, very costly, inflexible and inefficient, even suppressing all new and

creative initiatives, that do not fit within the framework set before. Nevertheless, due

to its visionary, abstract promises, it still remains very attractive for main parts of the

discipline and social-democratic politicians too. Even now some advocate a return to

the strong dirigiste government policy from before the eighties (Geuze et al. 2003),

while others stress the direction-setting position of the planners through 'telling the

right stories' (Hemel 2004/2007) or emphasise the importance – correct in itself, but

not exclusively so – of strict planning rules and spatial legislation (Needham 2005). In

this respect Dutch planning suffers in my view from a kind of 'law of the inhibitory

lead', while time and again we are redirected to the old, social democratic way of

doing things by massive, sometimes institutionalised or even opportunistic

(architectural) powers. But on the other hand the socially more committed and

engaged planners need to take the blame too. Because the post-modern, neo-liberal

and/or post-structural alternatives developed since the nineties were very good at

theorizing and undermining the foundations of that old planning system, but were

less effective at promoting new practical solutions. This 'paradox' seems to be not

only a Dutch problem, but also an important international topic as well. Because,

especially in Anglo-Saxon countries the behavioural, relational and poststructural

views on planning have been popular, while at the same the developed practical

proposals are hardly convincing; with new urbanism and smart growth ideas being

very disappointing (especially in respect to long term planning and sustainability).

Most of these practical planning proposals are highly government driven or at least

government oriented, inside out, and therefore in one way or another stating to know

what's good for the people and how businesses should act.

1 Not pretending to have found the only and best answer, we have taken a more

2 facilitating, instead of steering or discursive planning role in the Limburg case;

3 supporting, promoting, or attracting associations between stake- and shareholders,

4 with a sensible incorporation of the discursive criticisms which are in themselves

5 justified (Weinrich 1987, Imbroscio 1998, Davies 2002). Despite still numerous

6 imperfections, this first round of actor-relational-planning looks promising for the

7 reinvention of spatial planning. Indeed ARA is still highly fragile. While the other ARA-

8 impulses mentioned before are at their best only half way, the urban regime

9 association in the Limburg case is still exclusively focused on region branding, not on

10 preserving a holistic, interactive view on the various business cases. At the same

11 time, the recent financial crisis have also led to a more prudent attitude of the Orbis

12 Medical Care Concern, with regard to the further development of the integrated care

13 communities. Next to that the actor-relational experiments still have to cope with lock-

14 in reactions of existing public spatial planning institutions, a continuous clear

15 mismatch between the different sectors and departments of government and the re-

16 instalment of numerous state-regulations, which put its relationship with the

17 stakeholders of the business and civic society again in a kind of dependent, subsidy

18 driven association.

19

20 Nevertheless the actor-relational-approach is making itself also felt in a more

21 weighted, actor-relational way. Because the first attempts to develop an effective,

22 coordinating and associative planning are broadly recognised as new innovative and

23 possible sustainable crossovers. They bypass in an up-to-date version, the recurrent

24 nostalgic call for more visionary viewpoints, regulations and plans that should work,

25 given that those things are simply no longer possible in this age of ongoing

26 globalisation, individualisation and borderless re-collectivisation in numerous specific

27 social-economic interests. At this moment they can also rely on a broad theoretical

28 and scientific basis in the area of relational planning and actor-network associations,

which has mainly been developed mainly in Anglo-Saxon countries. Practicing these theories and theorizing the forthcoming behavioural practices, could give those relational views a new operational translation too. Finally, they offer a sensible basis for a more locally and regionally embedded form of sustainable development, in the broad (and the political) sense of the word. The Limburg case shows that it could be possible to arrange a sustainable economic, social, ecologic, cultural etc. regime of various stakeholders in the business, civic and public society. But what is needed now is to stimulate more cases, extensive evaluations, and the organisation of better institutional and associative frameworks in which the actor-network-coalitions in statu nascendi could prosper. Associative democracies, paralleled to an adaptive system of representational democracy, seem to be the focal course over here. And as such, next to ongoing theorizing practices and practiced theories, we need to refocus ourselves with regard to the basic planning orientation and instruments: reassembling planning outside-in.

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1   *Figures*

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3   Figure 1: Overall view of South Limburg

4   Figure 2: Interaction between new markets, usp's and possible themes for Suth Limburg

5   Figure 3: Alliances South Limburg, spring 2007

6   Figure 4: Image Healing Hills

7   Figure 5: Image Mutual Regional Regime South Limburg

8   Figure 6: Overview Integrated Care Communities Western Mine Region South Limburg

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[1] See also: http://project.vrom.nl/lijstweergave.asp?code_prgm=4

[2] Special Districts are bottom-up organizations formed to fulfill a specific need or service for the benefit of those involved. They are already nearly two centuries an important part of the American planning system. Although special districts are mostly characterized by a large direct involvement of the citizens, over the years also several malfunctions have run into the system. Sometimes there is a real accumulation of overlapping districts, sometimes a lack of oversight and duplication or functions. Therefore, in the USA one increasingly opts for a better integration of the special district system in that of the representative democracy (Little Hoover Commission 2000). In the Netherlands, however, this problem is not apparent. While here one starts of from a state-controlled, sometimes even over-regulated system, which could be very precise and selective to decide which parts of government could be better organized in special districts.

[3] (see also:
http://www.urbanunlimited.nl/uu/downloads.nsf/10/67ECA4A232D65D26C1256FBE006ECE40/$file/english+light.pdf)