THE CONCEPT OF INTEGRATION IN SPATIAL PLANNING : AN EXPLORATION

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Integration has become a central standpoint in planning practices in Europe. Several researchers (e.g. Nadin,2007; Vigar, 2009) incorporate the notion of integration in spatial planning. Nadin (2007) distinguishes spatial planning for traditional land use planning by its ability to encourage long term strategic visions, bring together and integrate policies, support sustainable development and improve cooperation between stakeholders and society. Vigar (2009) even argues in his article on integrated spatial planning that integration and spatial planning can be considered tautological concepts.

In the Netherlands the concept of integration has taken shape via the ambitions of the national government, in the 2006 spatial memorandum (Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment et al., 2006). To operate the ambition 'integrated spatial development' was introduced as a new planning process, a process designed to deal with several planning issues at the time, including integration (see Louw et al, 2003; Boelens and Spit, 2006). As a result of the economic set-back, many of the integrated spatial development projects in the Netherlands have come to a standstill, mainly due to their integrative, large-scale, and therefor costly character. As a result, discussion amongst professionals arises whether or not such (regional) development projects will be possible in the (near) future, and how these projects can be completed in integrative ways.

Although integration is a key concept in spatial planning, the actual meanings of the concept in relation to different planning processes and in different views of stakeholders are still vague. This paper explores the different meanings of integration in spatial planning / spatial development processes. Previous designed frameworks for integration (e.g. Healey, 2006; Kidd, 2007; Vigar, 2009) will be used to conceptualize the meanings of integration in spatial planning. Furthermore, and based on the frameworks for integration, the paper assesses the comprehensiveness of the integration concept in spatial planning, thereby taken into account that not all planning objectivesrequire integrative planning processes. The Dutch integrated planning practice will be used as exemplifying case study.

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1. Introduction

Integration has become a central standpoint in planning practices in Europe. Multi-functionality, complexity, coordination, and partnership are concepts often mentioned in connection with integration in planning processes. Although these concepts do not automatically reflect an integrated planning practice, they are used as signifiers to show the necessity of integration in planning projects. To have integrated planning practices is considered to be natural, sometimes even fashionable, obligatory, and the road to successful planning practices. The apparent role of integration in planning is revealed in studies of several researchers. Vigar (2009) argues that integration and spatial planning can be considered tautological concepts. A thought reflected in the definition of spatial planning of Nadin (2007, p. 43), who distinguishes spatial planning from traditional land use planning 'by its ability to encourage long term strategic visions, bring together and integrate policies, support sustainable development and improve cooperation between stakeholders and society'. A definition filled with the signifiers of integration: integrated policy, cooperation between stakeholders, strategic visions, etc. Vigar adds that spatial planning can be considered a holistic form of land use planning.

Although different researchers (e.g. Scharpf, 1996; Eggenberger and Partidário, 2000; Healey, 2006; Kidd, 2007; Vigar, 2009) have studied the concept of integration, there is no universal definition of the concept of integration. When looking at integration in planning practice, different stakeholders give different meanings to the concept and use different signifiers to point out integration in planning processes (cooperation, policy integration, complexity, partnership, synchronisation, etc.). Furthermore, different Dutch stakeholders questioned the role and necessity of integration in planning projects during interviews, pointing out the complex and time consuming character of integrated planning processes.

This paper explores the concept of integration in both planning literature and practice. The paper addresses different meanings of integration in spatial planning, the ability of integration to function as umbrella-term (Healey, 2006) for several other concepts related to planning, and the necessity of integration in planning processes. Central questions in this paper are: what is integrated spatial planning and is the umbrella-term integration comprehensible in planning practice? Previous designed frameworks for integration (e.g. Healey, 2006; Kidd, 2007; Vigar, 2009) acted as setting to conceptualize the different meanings of integration in spatial planning. Furthermore the frameworks helped to form signifiers for the analysis of planning practice. The paper subsequently assesses the ability of integration to function as an umbrella for several planning concepts, such as coordination, participation, etc.; thereby taken into account that not all planning objectives might require integrative planning processes. The Dutch regional planning practice is used as exemplifying case. Via a series of interviews with stakeholders in Dutch integrated planning processes and officers of regional governmental authorities, integration in planning processes was studied. In the final sections of this paper the necessity and implications of integration in spatial planning will be discussed.

2. Integration and spatial planning

Although integration has become a key concept in planning, the meaning of the concept varies. In different planning processes, stakeholder use different definitions and formats integrative planning practices. Furthermore different researchers, who studied the concept of integration in planning, have composed different frameworks for the concept, and its forms, aspects, dimensions or types (e.g. Healey, 2006; Kidd, 2007; Vigar, 2009). Healey (2006) studied policy statements in the English planning system and divides the policy statements in types of integration and their meanings. Kidd (2007) has drawn on the relation between health and planning, and created a detailed framework of different forms of integration in spatial planning. Vigar (2009) focused on the evolution of integrated spatial planning in UK territories. He chose to analyse spatial planning via the notion of governance lines, a form of horizontal and vertical integration. Although the different researchers have made different frameworks, elements of their frames overlap (see figure 1 and 2 for the frames of Healey and Kidd). The notion of horizontal and vertical integration, for instance, is found in the studies of all researchers. Vigar took this dimension of integration as basic grid, while in the framework of Kidd horizontal and vertical integration are part of the subdivision of territorial integration, the same applies to the frame of Healey where horizontal and vertical integration are part of co-ordination. One could argue that Vigar focuses on a specific dimension of integration, related to governance, coordination and the integration of policy and action.

Table 2 A framework of integration in spatial planning

Sectoral	Cross-sectoral Integration	Integration of different public policy domains within a territory.
	Inter-agency Integration	Integration of public, private and voluntary sector activity within a territory.
Territorial	Vertical Integration	Integration between different spatial scales of spatial planning activity.
	Horizontal Integration	Integration of spatial planning activity between adjoining areas or areas with some shared interest.
Organisational	Strategic Integration	Integration of spatial planning with other strategies, programmes and initiatives within a territory.
	Operational Integration	Integration of spatial planning with the delivery mechanisms in all relevant agencies within a territory.
	Disciplinary/Stakeholder Integration	Integration of different disciplines and stakeholders within a territory.

Figure 1. Kidd's framework for integration in planning (2007)

Table 5.1 Meanings of 'integration' in recent policy statements about the English planning system

		Type of integration	Meaning of integration
A		*Co-ordination*	
	A1	Aligning	Fitting in to other policies and strategies
	A2	Co-aligning	Mutual adjustment among diverse strategies
	A3	Multilevel co-aligning	Mutual adjustment both vertically and horizontally
B		*Framing*	
	B1	Widening a policy frame	Extending an existing frame to encompass a new dimension
	B2	Creating a new frame or vision	Developing a new policy focus and discourse
	B3	Creating a place-focused policy frame	Focus specifically on place qualities and spatial organisation
C		*Linking policy and action*	
	C1	Policy and delivery	Connecting policy assertions to specific delivery mechanisms
	C2	Regulation and investment	Linking principles governing land use regulation to those governing development investment
D		*Linking multiple actors*	
	D1	Involving	Drawing the community and key stakeholders into plan-making processes
	D2	Sharing knowledge and ideas	Drawing on and developing knowledge with stakeholders
	D3	Sharing ownership	Developing a shared commitment to the content and legitimacy of a plan/strategy

Figure 2. Healey's framework for integration (2006)

Both Healey (2006) and Kidd (2007) have created a detailed framework to define integration and specify its signifiers. Healey distinguished four main types of integration: co-ordination, framing, linking policy and action, and linking multiple actors. The framework focuses on specific actions to be taken to integrate policies in planning practices. Kidd distinguished three main types of integration: sectoral, territorial, and organisational integration (or co-operation). This framework focuses on the different sectors or places in which integration can take place. Although both researchers took a different viewpoint on integration in spatial planning, their frames partly overlap in terms of signifiers, focussed either on input (actors, organisations) or output (policy, implementation):

- Participation and cooperation (integration of stakeholders and initiatives)
- Spatial scales (vertical integration, redistribution of power, decentralisation)
- Adjoining areas (horizontal integration)
- Policy design (integration of disciplines, programs, policies, and strategies)
- Policy implementation (integration of sectoral activity)
- Policy design to implementation (integration of policy and action)

Both Healey (2006) and Kidd (2007), as well as Vigar (2009), view the signifiers as concepts important to successful spatial planning processes, joint under the umbrella of integration. While the researchers urge the necessity of integration in planning processes, they emphasize the need to be specific with the form of integration sought for in a planning process. Vigar (2009) questions how far integration can be pursued in the contemporary governance landscape. In relation to integration, Vigar refers to the principle of meta-governance and bottom-up planning. This has allowed for a wider variety of stakeholders in planning processes and has redistributed power in planning practices via processes of bottom-up planning and decentralization. Over all, planning processes have become more complex and fuzzy, making it more difficult to be integrative in planning practices. Vigar also points out the positive of this situation. New planning issues such as sustainability and renewable energy are more easily plugged in, and meta-governance allows for flexible alliances of stakeholders and planning processes. Healey (2006) concludes that different actors in planning processes first need to be able to identify their own objectives and their need for cooperation, before integrative projects can commence. Kidd (2007) argues the different facets of integration might more easily be understood in planning practice, than the actual use of integration as key concept. Although Kidd adds that integration only takes place if different sectoral policies are combined in spatial planning, and spatial planning adds to different sectoral policies.

To summarize, planning has become more holistic and complex. To deal with different issues in planning practice, integration has emerged as a concept to be able to organize successful planning processes with multiple stakeholders, different (level) planning authorities, and different views, strategies and policies of stakeholders. Although integration is important, to be able to grasp the meaning of integration in planning practice, the integration-umbrella has to be split in different, more easily understood, concepts regarding policy and stakeholders in planning processes. Furthermore, stakeholders have to identify their objectives for integration as specific as possible in the beginning of planning processes, to be able to reach an integrative planning process.

In the next sections of the paper the Dutch planning practice in explored, to assess whether or not the meanings of integration in planning processes were defined in the beginning of projects, and whether or not integration is understood as an important part of a more holistic and complex planning practice. The signifiers, as specified in this section, helped to identify integration in planning practice and have been used to analyse policy documents and interviews with stakeholders in integrative planning processes and officers of regional planning authorities.

3. The Dutch regional planning authorities in context

The regions discussed in this paper, the provinces, are the middle level governmental bodies in the Netherlands. The Netherlands have twelve provinces, which are considered institutionalized planning authorities. Because the Netherlands is a relatively small country, the Dutch provinces are also small in comparison to, for example, the German or Spanish regions. Although they are small, they face similar problems concerning governance as larger regions in Europe. In order to reach their objectives and mobilize their resources, they have to overcome divisions between different levels of government and public and private stakeholders. Regions have to 'formulate and mediate their interests in the intergovernmental arena' (Benz and Eberlein (1999).

The Dutch provinces have played a role in planning processes since the 1920s (Bosma, 1993), when regional infrastructure became a planning objective. In the 1950s the role of the provincial planning authorities increased when land consolidation was added as regional planning objective, although the national government was a dominant actor in preparation and implementation of land consolidation schemes. During the 1990s the role of provinces in policy-making and planning projects increased due to decentralisation of responsibilities and tasks from the national to provincial governmental level. The provinces started acting as mediator between national policy design and local policy implementation and gained a permanent role in planning projects crossing municipal border. Besides realizing desired land uses, landscape quality and effective policy implementation became provincial planning objectives. In 2004 the national investment fund for rural areas (*Investeringsbudget Landelijk Gebied*) was decentralized to the provinces, making the provinces accountable for the implementation of the National Ecological Network and the related land consolidations. As a result provincial planning authorities became active participating stakeholders in planning processes. Besides regulation and coordination of policies and projects, they were actively involved in integrated planning processes, including (strategic) acquisition of land and risk full investment in projects. (Van Straalen et al., in review)

4. Dutch integrative regional spatial planning

Although integration or integrative projects have been part of the Dutch planning tradition for a longer period of time, the concept of integration was formally introduced as objective of the national government in the 2006 spatial memorandum (Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment et al., 2006). To implement the objective, 'integrated spatial development' was introduced as a new planning process. Integrated spatial development had to deal with several different planning issues, including integration, transparency, openness, and participation (see Louw et al, 2003; Boelens and Spit, 2006). The concept might be best understood in relation to the explanation of new emerging patterns of governance, as referred to by Kidd (2007, p.163): *"... an emphasis on openness and transparency, broad*

stakeholder engagement and consensus building in policy development and delivery. The potential benefits to public policy of a discursive approach, bringing multiple perspectives together, are of course reflected in the extensive collaborative planning literature (e.g. Healey, 1997)". The concept of integrated spatial development as such, was seen as cure to many planning issues, although the content of the concept unclear. Different reports, such as a guide to integrated spatial development *(reiswijzer gebiedsontwikkeling,* e.g. Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, et al., 2007), had to provide for and facilitate new integrated planning projects.

As selected planning level for optimum integrated planning, the Dutch regional planning authorities – eager to prove themselves as mediator between national and local planning levels – started many integrated spatial planning projects in which integration was expressed as objective to guaranty the success of the projects. In many of these (cross-municipal) projects, cooperation was sought between province, municipalities, and private stakeholders, in some projects even national government became involved as stakeholder. Furthermore different land-uses where combined in these projects and cost-recovery schemes where set up to redirect funds from profitable to non-profitable parts of the projects (see De Wolff and Spaans, 2010).

As a result of the economic set-back, many of the integrated spatial development projects in the Netherlands have come to a standstill, mainly due to their integrative, large-scale, time-consuming, risky, and therefore costly character. Discussion amongst professionals arose whether or not such (regional) development projects will be possible in the (near) future, how these projects can be completed, and if integration of objectives, policies, and stakeholders in projects is still possible (see for instance Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations, et al., 2011).

5. Integration in Dutch regional spatial planning, a stakeholder perspective

As shown above, the economic set-back, and its unwinding, has influenced planning practices. As a result planners and governmental officers have taken a reflexive attitude towards the planning practices started before the crisis when, in the words of an interviewee, 'everything seemed possible'. As part of a larger project concerning spatial planning and land policy in the Netherlands, interviews took place with different stakeholders in integrative planning processes and different officers of regional planning authorities (the provinces), in the period 2009 to 2012. One of the topics addressed in these interviews was integration in planning projects, sometimes introduced by the interviewer, sometimes brought up by the interviewee before a question was asked on this topic. In this paper the analysis of these interviews is used to explore the meanings and roles of integration in Dutch regional planning processes, according to planning practice. The signifiers mentioned in section 2 of this paper were used as framework for analysis of the interviews:

- Participation and cooperation (integration of stakeholders and initiatives)
- Spatial scales (vertical integration, redistribution of power, decentralisation)
- Adjoining areas (horizontal integration)
- Policy design (integration of disciplines, programs, policies, and strategies)
- Policy implementation (integration of sectoral activity)
- Policy design to implementation (integration of policy and action)

The different interviewees all had different ideas of integration in spatial planning. Some of the interviewees asked for a clarification or definition of the concept before addressing the question, others explained their idea of the concept, still others referred to the concept without explaining their ideas, using integration as general concept. In all interviews the interviewees where given the opportunity to explain their ideas of the concept, before the interviewer would address the concept (as umbrella-term).
Most used terms in relation to integration where complexity, participation, and integrated implementation of different land uses. Officers of the regional planning authorities often mentioned the relation to landscape quality, as 'glue' between different land uses, the possibility to integrate land uses and planning projects on a cross-municipal scale, and cost recovery within projects as additional perceptions.

One interviewee emphasized the possibility of regional planners to choose an area oriented viewpoint, as meaning of integrated policy implementation. The ability to look through a lens of planning processes, instead of having a sectoral lens. This gave the interviewee the advantage to combine funds, planning tools, and planning objectives of different stakeholders involved in the planning process. In the view of this interviewee integration or integrated spatial development was a tool to implement planning objectives such as the objectives of the investment fund for rural areas. Some of the other stakeholders had the same notion of integrated spatial development as tool, while other interviewees had a different view. In the view of this second group of interviewees integration was an objective to be met in planning processes. As a consequence some interviewees viewed integration as opportunity to improve processes, while other viewed it as an obligation, sometimes interfering with other planning objectives.

One interviewee referred to the a phrase of national government from the 2006 spatial memorandum (Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, et al. 2006), "*decentralised if possible, centralised in necessary*", in which decentralised planning processes are preferred. The interviewee stated '*sectoral if possible, integrative if necessary*', relating to the complexity of integrative planning processes and favouring straight forward land use planning. One interviewee adds to this statement by highlighting the possibility to overrule municipalities via a regional zoning plan, possible since the new Spatial Planning Act of 2008. This offers the provinces the possibility to implement national or regional planning objectives without the cooperation from or by excluding a municipality opposing the implementation. Although most interviewees would opt for cooperation with

municipalities and state this form of planning would damage the relationship between municipalities and provinces, this would simplify planning processes.

In relation to the previous point, different interviewees relate to the complexity of integrative planning processes in which several stakeholders are involved. Often these processes are time consuming, because all stakeholders have a voice in the design and implementation of the project. In some planning projects private stakeholders or different ministries involved in a project of national importance, cooperate and are represented as a group by one person. According to an interviewee the advantage of this form of cooperation in the simplification of complex processes with multiple stakeholders. However, the different representatives have to spare more time for consultation with the other members of the group, not necessarily speeding up the process. Although a high number of stakeholders might lengthen processes, the involvement of many stakeholders in planning processes is seen as a natural occurrence of more integrative or governance oriented planning projects. One interviewee refers to the concept of depillarization in the Netherlands, resulting in smaller groups of stakeholders, more groups of stakeholders and individuals, and more independent voices. According to this interviewee we should not confuse the involvement of multiple stakeholders in planning processes and the concept of integration in planning. The first is a (no-stoppable) natural occurrence, the latter being something to actively strive for in processes or to use as a tool to improve the effectiveness of planning processes.

6. Discussion and conclusion

Overall interviewees did not have a straightforward definition of integration in planning processes, but referred to the same signifiers as the frameworks of Healey (2006) and Kidd (2007); although integration was mentioned more often in relation to policy implementation and the involvement of multiple stakeholders, than in relation to the integration of policies. Furthermore, in relation to horizontal and vertical integration, the regional planning officers often referred to policy integration within the own organisation and in cross-municipal projects, but the synchronisation of policies between provinces is less often mentioned. In relation to the aim of Dutch national government - although the national government recently collapsed and elections will be held in September 2012 - to decentralise the responsibility for spatial planning and the development of nature to the provinces, the synchronisation of policies related to planning becomes more important. Linked to the reasoning that borders are merely social constructs and expressions of power relations (Allen et al., 1998; Paasi, 2010), provinces or in general stakeholders integrating policies should be aware of these power relations and if possible redistribute power to be able to integrate policy design and implementation.

When assessing the meaning of integration in spatial planning, there is a deficiency between planning literature and practice. In relation to the observation of Kidd (2007), the fuzziness of the notion of integration, planning practice might benefit

from a clear separation of different form, dimensions, or aspects of integration. Interviews have shown that the meaning of integration differs between stakeholders involved in the same planning process or at the same planning level, making it harder for them to cooperate, integrate policies, or implement policies in an integrative manner. Concepts such as coordination, cooperation, cross-border projects, synchronization of policies speak to the mind of interviewees and might more easily spark integrative planning processes, than the vague, or rich, concept of integration.

As for the (future) role of integration in planning processes, integration is there to stay. From the perspective of planning literature, integration is a natural part of a more holistic spatial planning. From the perspective of planning practice, integration is not a necessity when opting for traditional (land use) planning projects and integration complicates planning processes. However, interviewees have shown the dedication of planning practitioners to integration and integrative planning processes. The interviewees point out the strengthening role of integration and participation in integrative planning processes, leading to stakeholders who understand each other, share interests and might more easily seek cooperation in future planning projects. Interviewees also hint at the necessity of policy integration to benefit effective planning projects; although future integrative projects would be of a smaller scale, compared to those prior to the economic setback.

7. Future research

After studying the meanings and role of integration in planning processes, and concluding integration is a viable part of planning practice, a new research aim emerges. This paper mainly viewed integration in planning practice from the perspective of planning output and input from stakeholders. Future research could focus on the conditions for integrative planning processes. This research should not only focus on the resources of stakeholders and the power distribution between stakeholders, but should also focus on laws and regulations enabling or disabling integrative planning processes.

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