

# **PRINCIPLES OF SPATIAL CONCEPTUALISATION**

## **Examples from IJmeer: a Dutch Regional Planning Case<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Abstract**

Spatial concepts in planning are a helpful tool in presenting a mix of spatial knowledge and ambitions by an appealing label. We advise to use spatial concepts that typify a particular (desired) spatial situation and that connect people and their different ambitions, to assist actual Dutch planning, which is described as a problem-orientated, complex and shared practice. In the results of a collective Vision for the future of the IJmeer area in the Netherlands, we observe spatial concepts that connect spatial functions and scales as well as organisations, but only connect to some extent. More research is useful, to understand the various roles and criteria for successes of spatial concepts in divers contexts.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on Abstract 'PRINCIPLES OF SPATIAL CONCEPTUALISATION: TELLING THE 'GAP STORY' OF THE IDEAL AND THE ACTUAL'.

## **1. Spatial Concepts as Creative Packages in Dutch Planning?**

*“In the IJmeer case all aspects of the actual Dutch spatial planning profession seem to come together. A palette of problems and opportunities will appear in the (medium) long term, considering water management, nature-conservation and -development, urban growth, infrastructural congestions, recreation and cultural heritage. This wide-ranging palette of developments will certainly influence the experience and characteristics of the IJmeer. (...) This multitude of questions (that sometimes conflict) requires the search for creative solutions. This search should happen in such a way that the IJmeer will develop as a ‘relief’ in the urban dynamic of Amsterdam and Almere.”* [www.verkenningijmeer.nl](http://www.verkenningijmeer.nl)<sup>2</sup>

### 1.1 Opening

Spatial planning practice is about “making spaces” (Perry in Campbell and Fainstein 2003). These two ‘simple’ words stand for the complex subject of planning and related creative activities. In above mentioned example we refer to the collective search for creative solutions (making) for the diverse ambitions and developments considering the IJmeer area in the Netherlands (spaces). This paper focuses on a planning tool that includes aspects of both ‘spaces’ and ‘making’; namely, we focus on the use of spatial concepts in planning practice. For now, we define a spatial concept as a ‘package’, including a mix of spatial knowledge and spatial ambitions, expressed by an appealing label, and used within several planning activities (cf. ‘planning concept’ by Zonneveld 1991). Spatial plans and debates include several spatial concepts that refer, in a metaphorical way, to an actual or desired spatial situation. For example, the landscape consists of a ‘mosaic’ of functions; the three regions should be ‘connected’ as a ‘network’; urban ‘growth’ can be located ‘sprawled’ or ‘concentrated’; the neighbourhood is preventing the building of ‘white fungus’ country houses; etcetera. This paper explores the working of spatial concepts, focussing on Dutch regional spatial planning practice, by studying their spatial dimension and their creative context.

### 1.2 Dutch Setting

Dutch planning, at least the image or ideal of Dutch planning, has been transformed from a top-down, controlled and expert practice towards a problem (or area) orientated, complex and shared practice (cf. Hager and Zonneveld 2000, Dammers et al 2004). In the first setting,

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<sup>2</sup> Translations in this paper are my own; all translations concern the IJmeer case.

‘planning concepts’ have been a popular tool (e.g. Faludi and Van der Valk, 1994). A study of current Dutch planning also describes the value of planning concepts (Dammers et al 2004, based on Zonneveld 1991). They describe four (possible) functions of planning concepts, which can be present simultaneously into one concept: a cognitive, intentional, communicative and operational function. In contrast to a previous list of functions by Zonneveld (1991), the institutional function is now left out; this change is a sign that, in our words, an ‘authoritative’ dimension is no longer applicable for contemporary planning practice. Moreover, again in line with the change into a ‘problem (or area) orientated, complex and shared practice’, successful planning conceptualisation is defined as “a matter of co-production”; the “emancipation” of spatial conceptualisation is rooted in “multiformity” and based on “different perspectives” (Van Duinen 2004, p 292, in reference to Sijmons).

### 1.3 Research focus

Firstly, this paper focuses on the ‘state of affairs’ of the working of spatial concepts in a regional planning practice by looking at the creative dimension of a ‘complex’ and ‘shared’ practice. We specifically focus on a Dutch practice, the collective making of a vision for the future of the IJmeer area, which is characterised by many involved organisations and therefore including many different perspectives on one space.

Secondly, in this paper we stress and evaluate the cognitive function of concepts; yet, we also take in the influence of a communicative, intentional and operational dimension (see ‘creative context’ in part 2 of this paper). The cognitive function refers to the ‘knowledge role’ of a concept being the interpretation(s) of a spatial reality (Zonneveld and Verwest 2005). The main role of a concept in planning is not cognitive; a concept is neither used to analyse or tell the ‘truth’ per se (*ibid*) nor to generate new knowledge like most models do (Klaasen 2000). Despite the restrictive cognitive function of a concept in theory, we argue that concepts in practice are mostly used in reference to a spatial situation, for example to explain or promote the main message behind a concept. In that case, the cognitive function, as reference to spatial characteristics, is co-defining the meaning of a concept. Moreover, we argue that spatial references by a concept can be helpful, especially to ‘ground’ the spatial problem or spatial ambition on regional or local level. In view of that, Zonneveld and Verwest (2005) explain that planning conceptualisation in the Netherlands needs to be more specific and inventive instead of being too universal and abstract. So, we argue that a concept often includes creative

spatial knowledge about a desired (or undesired) spatial situation in nature and should do so to be more specific and inventive, in line with above mentioned suggestions.

In this paper we check our assumptions about the use of concepts. What is the actual performance of spatial conceptualisation in the Netherlands regarding spatial references and assisting contemporary regional planning projects? To answer this question, this paper firstly investigates to what extent *actual* spatial conceptualisation in a regional planning practice includes spatial characteristics and how it is creative in that specific context.

#### 1.4 Approach

The situation of spatial conceptualisation will be further investigated. Prior to elaborating an *ideal* approach of spatial conceptualisation for a specific context, we firstly explore the *actual* working of spatial conceptualisation in Dutch regional planning practice. In this way, we gain a better understanding of the real problems and practical demands regarding spatial conceptualisation in Dutch context. We use a specific planning perspective, based on ‘Making Spaces’, to study the use of spatial concepts in a specific regional planning project (cf. perspective as ‘Framing Theory’, Allmendinger 2002b). This perspective includes a combination of some planning, social and geographical theories (see figure 1); it is consequently developed into a structure to study a specific case.

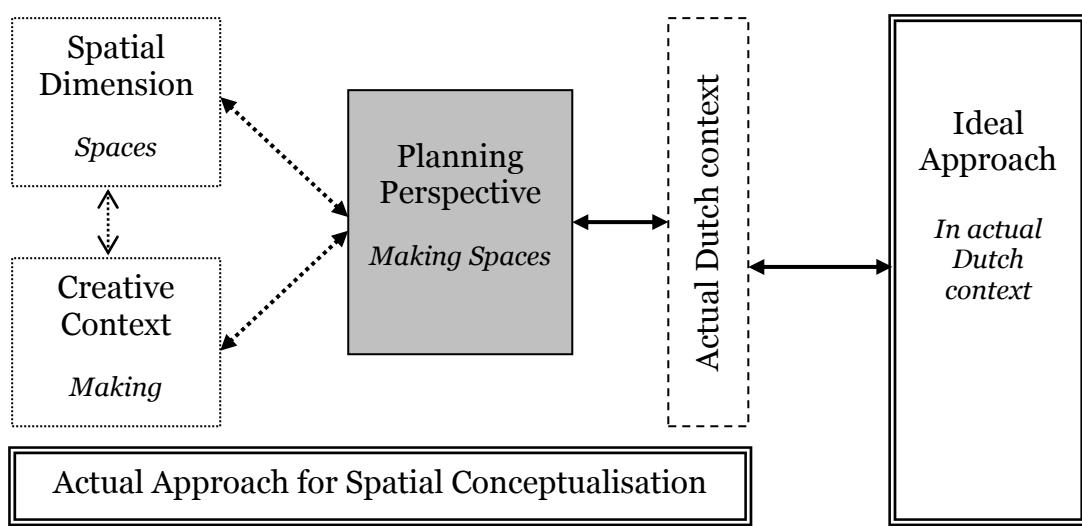


Figure 1 - Actual and ideal approach for spatial conceptualisation in Dutch planning

The inclusion of a specific context into the formulation of an ideal approach or theory is important; then, “theory is mediated through space and time allowing for the differential formulation, interpretation and application of theories” (Allmendinger 2002b p. 89). Accordingly, this is planning research by “contextualised stories”, in order “...to give insight into how messy problems involving values, judgment, multiple interpretations, planners’ particular identities, and personal and group agendas have unfolded in particular context” (Watson 2002, p. 185). In part 1 of this paper we already explain the general Dutch context of spatial conceptualisation. In part 3 we specifically study spatial conceptualisation in the IJmeer case.

## **2. Spatial Conceptualisation from a ‘Making Spaces’ Perspective**

### 2.1 Spatial Dimension

Again, we express planning as “making spaces” (Perry, in Campbell and Fainstein 2003); accordingly spatial conceptualisation is, one of many, typical activities of “making spaces”. The importance of ‘spatial’ knowledge and ‘making’ knowledge is recognised in planning practices. Planners deal with a spatial situation for a reason; they deal with ‘what’ and ‘why’.

- The desired spatial adaptation to (expected) climate changes, for example affecting river-basin management, needs planners with a holistic approach, having knowledge about social, political and physical systems (cf. Wiering and Immink 2006).
- The debate about how to represent and to deal with the ‘urban’ and the ‘rural’ requires understanding about physical changes as well as policy developments, for example resulting in the introduction of innovative spatial images to challenge the sometimes false dichotomy (cf. Hidding et al 2000).
- Planners have to think about the material appearance and consequences of abstract trends, like the popular ‘network society’, that often direct planning policies (cf. Albrechts and Mandelbaum 2005).

Despite of the necessary entity of ‘making’ and ‘spaces’ in practices, mainstream planning theories emphasise the ‘making’ more than the ‘spaces’; these theories consist of how to plan and who is planning (or for whom), as in most communicative and advocacy planning approaches (Allmendinger 2002a). What is the spatial dimension of deliberate consensus and lively pleas? “..., while planning theorists have brought critical reflection to many aspects of planning over the last decades, the spatial understandings embedded within planning practices have yet to be subjected to the same level of critique.” (Jones 2000, p. 380; see also Yiftachel

2006). Do planning theorists reflect adequately on what and why to plan? If planners incorporate more explicitly a spatial dimension into approaches, we gain a better understanding about the context and specificity (Allmendinger 2002b), as well as the “formative power” (Jones 2000) of planning approaches.

## 2.2 Creative context

Next to the focus on the spatial dimension of planning, we use a perspective that focuses on the combination of ‘making’ and ‘spaces’. To begin with, in some landscape studies is explained how *each* representation of space is to some extent ‘creative’ itself, culturally and historically dependent and individually and momentarily variable; therefore, a spatial representation is no simple mirror of the world (e.g. Barnes and Duncan 1992). Moreover, representations in planning, like a spatial concept, go beyond a ‘simple’ creative representation; they include an (explicit) spatial ambition by definition. The combination of ‘making’ and ‘space’ is in planning often considered in view of discursive analysis. Jensen & Richardson, among others (cf. Hager 2004; Van Assche 2004), reason that. “...understanding the relationship between physical space and social life in its dialectic relationship between spatial/material practices and symbolic meanings is essential to critical spatial analysis” (Jensen & Richardson 2004, p. 65). Next to a collective ‘social’ setting, individual users define the meaning of a concept. Users are like “readers” of concepts, interpreting it in their own ways, neglecting the ‘original’ meaning of the “authors”: “the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author” (Barthes, 1977). Consequently, a main defining aspect of the meaning of concepts is the *ambitions* of planners in a specific situation. Ambitions are collective, being policy or organisational aims (cf. Hager 2004), as well as individual expectations and responsibilities (cf. ‘will to order’ in Jensen and Richardson 2004).

We argue that spatial concepts are interesting to study in the light of planning as ‘making spaces’. They have a spatial dimension, at least in nature; therefore, concepts have the potential to promote or explain a spatial situation, being the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of planning activities. Moreover, spatial concepts combine spatial knowledge and creative making knowledge. Studying a story of spatial concepts in a planning project can tell us about the spatial and political context they are used in.

### 2.3 Characteristics of Spatial Concepts: a Structure

The planning perspective of ‘making spaces’ is a way of focussing on some specific issues about spatial conceptualisation in planning. Additionally, we make this approach more manageable as method for studying practice, resulting in a structure of characteristics of spatial conceptualisation. The structure will be used in the case study about spatial concepts in the IJmeer vision. We elaborate the characteristics of a ‘spatial dimension’ and a ‘creative context’ (see figure 1). These issues are expected to play a (possible) role in the working of conceptualisation; each use of a spatial concept - in a specific document, by a specific user, at a specific moment - is identified by a unique specification of (some of) these characteristics.

<b>Characteristics of spatial concepts</b>	
Concept <i>a</i> , in document <i>b</i> / by <i>c</i> , at moment <i>d</i> .	
<i>The concept is used, to make references to which...?</i>	
<b>Spatial Dimension I</b>	
<i>Rooted in spatial nature</i>	
A. Material Features	... <i>physical forms and type?</i>
B. Time Features	... <i>developments, kind and range of processes?</i>
D. Scale of functions	... <i>(geographical) area of operations / (political) level of actions?</i>
E. Position	... <i>geographical location and/or general issue?</i>
<b>Spatial Dimension II</b>	
<i>Rooted in spatial ambitions</i>	
C. Functions	... <i>possibilities and restrictions of features?</i>
F. Connections	... <i>(network) relations and dependencies between aspects?</i>
G. Moment	... <i>performance, from an actual to a desired situation?</i>
H. Colour	... <i>nuance, first direction of ambitions?</i>
<i>The concept is part of a setting, including which...?</i>	
<b>Creative Context</b>	
I. Individual Ambitions*	... <i>professional drive?</i>
II. Collective Ambitions	... <i>activity, i.e. task and stage of concept?</i> ... <i>target, i.e. reason for project?</i>

\* *Insofar as made explicit.*

Table 1 Structure: Identifying Spatial Concepts<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Based on: Kleefmann 1984 (environment in a social context); Graham and Healey 1999 (relational approach of space); Healey 2004 (criteria for evaluating concepts of space and place); Bos 2005 (time and space in planning); Sayre 2005 (ecological and geographical scale).

### **3. Spatial Conceptualisation in the IJmeer Vision**

#### 3.1 Introduction

This paper started with an illustration of a complex combination of some spatial challenges concerning the IJmeer area in the Netherlands. Now, we study the working of spatial conceptualisation in a particular IJmeer planning case: the collective making of a Vision for the future of the IJmeer area (ANWB et al 2005). While there have been developed many plans and strategies for the IJmeer area and surrounding, we take this particular Vision as starting point of our research. Namely, it is a typically contemporary Dutch case as described in part 1.2; the making of the Vision is initiated by an interest group (instead of governmentally organised), produced by a cooperation of seven different organisations<sup>4</sup> (government and interest organisations) and resulted in a shared Vision for a complex regional situation (see also reference in ANWB et al 2005, p. 5). We specifically learn about the spatial dimension and the creative features of spatial conceptualisation in this actual regional planning case. Accordingly, we detail the context-box of figure 1 by describing this specific IJmeer case; making the ideal approach in this case both applying to and depending on this situation.

We study some specific spatial concepts of the Vision: Waterpark, North Wing (of the Rimcity/Randstad area), Double City, Ecological Mainport, Green-Blue & Red-Grey (scale shift). Each concept is a ‘package’ of spatial knowledge and spatial ambitions, expressed by an appealing label. However, it is only after our analysis that we can decide to what extent these concepts are used as spatial concepts according to above-mentioned definition. We study these spatial concepts by two sources: the Vision document (ANWB et al 2005) and interviews of involved organisations (see Boekel et al 2006). Insight can be helpful in answering the main question of this research: what is the actual performance of spatial conceptualisation in the Netherlands regarding spatial references and assisting contemporary regional planning projects? The above-described structure (table 1) is used to identify the

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<sup>4</sup> Following organisations have been involved: Municipality of Almere, Municipality of Amsterdam, Province of Flevoland, Province of Noord-Holland, Rijkswaterstaat (Dutch directorate General for Public Works and Water Management), Staatsbosbeheer (Dutch Forestry Commission), Natuurmonumenten (Dutch Society for the Preservation of Nature), ANWB (Royal Dutch touring -tourist and traffic- association).

different spatial dimensions and to describe the creative context - not as normative criteria but as unfolding criteria.

### 3.2 Spatial Concepts in Vision and Interviews

#### *Ambitions*

The concepts are used for the making and presenting of a long-term vision for 2030 to 2050; therefore, based on an actual situation but referring to a desired future situation. The making of the Vision has started from diverse ambitions yet has been driven by a collected will to order a shared space; a shared vision is the target of the project. The diverse interest are shortly but clearly explained in the Vision; then, the Vision can be regarded as one interest. The interviews specifically show the ‘individual’ ambitions and perspectives of the different organisations; meanwhile, the respondents reconfirm in the interviews their support for the shared basis and integral results.

#### *Waterpark*

The main motto of the Vision is ‘Waterpark IJmeer for the North Wing’; “the term Waterpark expresses the ambition to develop IJmeer and surrounding watersides towards an area in which recreation, nature and urbanisation go together in harmony.” (ANWB et al 2005, p. 11) Literally, “[w]ater refers to the classical element that has shaped Holland... park refers to an enclosed area in an urban environment, providing place for people and nature.” (ibid, p. 11) The addition of ‘for the North Wing’ in the motto expresses the regional meaning of Waterpark. Waterpark is part of the connected ‘wetlandsystem’ Markermeer. Moreover, the document describes Waterpark in relation to ‘experience’ and watersport, as well as in relation to European Water, Bird and Habitat guidelines. Concerning urbanisation, Waterpark is named as an important regional business establishment criterion. Next to the reference to land use functions, Waterpark is characterised by describing three typical landscapes of the region. Above all, the combination of ambitions is emphasised.

In line with the Vision, the respondents regard Waterpark as the appealing motto and relevant result of the making of the vision. It is considered as a “complete package” of (land use) functions. Then, some name “ecological development”, as the most important ambition (Flevoland); others are most concerned about the recreational side of Waterpark (ANWB).

### *North Wing*

North Wing is an older existing concept, mostly used as organisational concept, referring to the cooperation between local and regional governments in the fields of urbanisation, infrastructure, economic and other spatial development in the North part of the Rimcity (Randstad) area. As spatial concept, mostly geographically, it refers to the North part of the Dutch Rimcity area, a metropolitan area in the West of the Netherlands. In the Vision, North Wing is used as additive to the main motto of Waterpark as ‘Waterpark of the North Wing’. This especially takes in the regional dimension of the IJmeer area, referring to the broader context. Main theme of North Wing in the document is the urbanisation challenge: a big housing task of 150.000 new houses for 2010-2030, together with economic development. Most respondents refer to North Wing as the geographical area and suitable scale of dealing with (shared) spatial issues, mostly housing. Like Waterpark, North Wing is interpreted from own perspectives, so that some organisations for example stress the nature or recreational qualities of the area next to ‘accepting’ the need for housing.

### *Double City*

Double City is another spatial concept in the Vision, though less present in quantity and significance. The main message behind Double City is expressed in a map entitled “from two separate cities toward one Double City Amsterdam-Almere surrounding the IJmeer” (*ibid*, p. 22). The ‘ideal’ picture shows some arrows, connecting both cities, probably referring to infrastructural connections. Moreover, the central space IJmeer (as Ecological Mainport), is enclosed in the Double City picture and expressed as ‘vital’ component of Double City. So Double City is referring to a desired future development, including the cooperation and physical connection of both cities.

Respondents also have an image of two depending cities, but have different opinions about the details of Double City. Amsterdam rather talks about ‘metropolis Amsterdam’, while Flevoland stresses the development of Almere. Also, some do not explicitly mention the ecological and recreational qualities as part of the concept; others either include these ‘green’ features into their story about Double City or reject the single urban focus of the concept. So, there is some difference in explanations and recognition of this concept by the respondents.

### *Ecological Mainport*

The water of IJmeer, together with Markermeer, is presented in the document as future Ecological Mainport of the ‘wetlandsystem’, being part of an extensive nature-area that has

“an absolutely unique position on the ‘green-blue’ map of Europe” (*ibid*, p. 27). It is a ‘stepping stone’ in the migration of birds. The concept is also presented as (at least) equally important as the Economic Mainport Schiphol.

In line with the vision, most respondents refer to the importance of connecting nature areas and to the broader context of the Ecological Mainport. They regard it as a relevant concept, and explain the (mutual) dependency with urban development. Though, ANWB is less enthusiastic; they consider Ecological Mainport as a very small area and worry about the accessibility of the area.

### *Colours Green-Blue and Red-Grey*

Green-Blue and Red-Grey are used as adjective to ‘questions’, ‘scale shift’ and ‘development axis’. The meaning of ‘scale shift’ is restricted to references to ‘regional’ and ‘national’ ambitions. Green-Blue (ecology and water) and Red-Grey (urban and infrastructure, as well as Double City) are described as separate concepts. Moreover, special emphasis is made to their connection and dependency: “... without the investments in the ecological quality every investment in urbanisation around the IJmeer is an unfeasible ambition” (*ibid*, p. 7) This combination is the core of the vision.

Respondents also answered questions about the combination of ‘Green-Blue and Red-Grey scale shift’. Various combination are named, with a main focus on the ‘colours’ (and on not ‘scale shift’): for example, nature needs a ‘threat’ to survive (Amsterdam), searching for a ‘balance’ (Almere), first green then red (Natuurmonumenten & Flevoland). So, the combination is considered as relevant, but explained in some different ways. The ‘scale shift’ is only explained by Staatsbosbeheer, referring to the different levels of the ecological system.

### 3.3 Observations

The most elaborated spatial reference of the spatial concepts in the vision is made to the aspect of ‘scale of functions’ (see table 1). Concepts refer to their broader spatial (and political) context, so that possibilities and restrictions of functions are explicated. Another striking issue are the often mixed ‘colours’ of concepts, accepted by the diverse organisations. Here, both aspects of ‘scale of functions’ and ‘colours’ assist in the aim of a shared vision. The suggestion of area-specific concepts (see 1.2) is only performed by Waterpark and partly by Double City, Ecological Mainport and North Wing. As expected, the interviews show different interpretations regarding the spatial dimension of concepts, rooted in different ambition. Therefore, the spatial dimensions from the Vision are diverging by the individual

interpretations. Another issue is that some concepts include many different characteristics; for example, North Wing is about the regional dimension of Waterpark and about a housing challenge, apart from being an organisational concept. This can result in a too ‘packed’ concept, lacking a specific identity and confuse in discussion.

#### **4. Conclusion and Discussion: Towards Ideal Conceptualisation?**

##### **4.1 Connecting Concepts: ‘A problem shared is a problem halved’**

What is the actual performance of spatial conceptualisation in the Netherlands regarding spatial references and assisting contemporary regional planning projects? In the IJmeer case, we define spatial concepts as helpful in connecting people, by connecting their ambitions and providing a collective motto to plan. Moreover, we find spatial concepts constructive in their connection to the broader spatial context; references were made to specific function(s) yet taking in their functionality on larger scale. The contextualized approach of this research (see part 1.4) does not exclude that insights are helpful in comparable planning situations, for example, for European projects with a complex space and a diversity of ambitions and backgrounds.

So, the use of spatial concepts in the IJmeer case demonstrates that they connect spatial functions within one concept and connect people and their ambitions. What about the connection among the set of spatial concepts? The combination of concepts is not studied in detail but the interviews show examples of different combinations of concepts; organisations point to diverse priorities between concepts and to diverse importance of concepts. Two organisations can agree with both concept A and B. Then, it is important to know how they regard the combination and ranking of A and B. Are individual ambitions and interpretations going to overrule the power of a shared concept? The situation of varied combinations indicates problems on the longer-term, making the actual results only a seeming or partial solution. Nevertheless, decisions on the longer term can be made, in the case of (once) shared concepts, from a developed shared perspective and understanding. In addition, it is useful to study the decisive factors of different interpretations of spatial concept, in so far as possible. In the IJmeer case we observe different ambitions and backgrounds, rooted in factors as differences in scale of actions (from local to regional), responsibilities (from a single interest to integration of interest) and location (from ‘footloose’ to a geographical position).

#### 4.2 Halfway Concepts and Ideal Roles

Based on the actual image of Dutch planning (see 1.2), we expected area-specific and shared spatial concepts to be a helpful tool. However, in the IJmeer case spatial concepts are identified as only spatially specific *to a certain level* of details and only shared *for that moment*. Moreover, the combination of demands seems to result in inconsistency; (spatial) details can diverge people, and sharedness can level out specificity. Is this a problem? Or can we find a solution in a concept that is (paradoxically) specific -on abstract level- and binds people? To answer these questions, we need to be more specific about the diverse role of spatial concepts, partially based on the inherent functions of planning concept (see part 1.2).

We argue that the success of spatial concepts depends on the role of that spatial concept in that situation. For example, a spatial concept can be helpful in providing commitment between people, in promotion of a spatial situation, in debate or for design. These roles have different criteria for success. Commitment requires a shared concept; debate can also be progressed by controversial concepts. Promotion requires an appealing concept; design needs an accurate concept. How to deal with the possible roles and qualities of spatial concepts in a regional planning case? Problematically, roles of concepts in practice are mostly not explicit, evolving in time, changing per situation and (therefore) hard to distinguish and to use explicitly. Unless this restriction, we identify two alternative options for ‘ideal’ spatial conceptualisation, to discuss and elaborate. Firstly, a ‘single’ concept can transform from one role into another role, as from an appealing binding concept towards a more spatially detailed design concept. In that case a concept is durable but risks to become ‘dead’ and disputed (in later stage); moreover, it can confuse in communication if ‘one’ concept is qualified by different functions within one setting. Alternatively, a planning case can be assisted by a series of different spatial concepts, all including a distinctive role. Then, each concept can be made perfect according to its intended role; however, the manageability of this method is disputable and the short-term character of the concepts may reduce the specific power of that concept. Both alternatives show again that roles and successes of spatial concepts depend on their specific context, as the people who use and interpreted them and the task it is used for.

#### 4.3 Future research

It is interesting to study former documents about the IJmeer area resulting in a ‘genealogy’ of spatial concepts. Hereby, we can distinguish trends and breakpoints in conceptualisation; consequently we can identify old but helpful concepts and new and innovative concepts,

including their specific role. To show the further performance of the spatial concepts of the IJmeer Vision it will be helpful to survey the continuation of the concepts in follow-up documents, either related to this initiative or other plans related to the same area. A short investigation shows new plans by some of the involved organisations of the Vision, yet in a ‘traditional’ setting: for example, a ‘red’ program for the complete North Wing area on the authority of the national government (Ministerie LNV et al 2006) and a ‘green’ answer to this program by a group of nature organisation (Staatsbosbeheer et al 2007). Strikingly, the main concept of Waterpark has only been mentioned once in the first document and never in the latter document. Furthermore, whereas Double City was still explained as an integral concept in the Vision document, in the North Wing letter it is mainly presented as a ‘red’ concept. The green manifest also introduces new (sectoral) concepts for the IJmeer area, like Blue Hart. In these cases Waterpark was not ‘alive’ anymore; is that a sign of failure? Or, is that a sign that concepts are just temporarily yet can still be successful for that moment? (cf. part 4.2). A more extensive study is necessary to understand and explain spatial concepts in actual Dutch planning and their criteria for success. Accordingly, we can identify the powers and possibilities of spatial conceptualisation.

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