Planning tools in the Flemish region. A socio-political perspective

1.   Introduction - a crisis in Flemish spatial planning?

During the 1990s the Flemish region experienced a heyday in the field of spatial planning. Attempts since the early 1980s to develop a strategic spatial plan for Flanders finally resulted in the approval of a 'spatial structure plan for Flanders' (1997). Moreover, the existing legislation regarding spatial planning was replaced, first by the planning decree of 1997, later followed by the spatial planning decree of 18 May 1999. This decree renewed the existing zoning system and added a strategic planning system to the equation. Moreover, it forced all public authorities to invest in spatial planning by obliging all municipalities, provinces and the Flemish Government to draw up a spatial structure plan. This created a large amount of work for spatial planners.

But while the planning community was still in a state of euphoria, the context changed rather swiftly and thoroughly from 1999 onwards. The slow transformation of the welfare state since the mid-1970s led to a neo-liberal reversal, which focused on totally different themes: a more flexible approach to spatial planning and offering more possibilities for departures from the rules, granting legal security to dwellings and company buildings established in areas that did not conform to the zoning regulation, the release of areas for residential expansion, the creation of new industrial estates, preferably along motorways. At the same time the planning system became increasingly bureaucratic; as a result it lost its strategic character. Structure plans were standardised but were not implemented. In the meantime a power struggle between sectors impacted spatial planning, resulting in an increased complexity of rules and regulations and the keeping of a 'space accounting system'. Finally spatial planners were kept far away from the more important dossiers, such as the discussion regarding the future of the national airport or the completion of the Antwerp ring road. The image of spatial planning became very negative.

The contradiction between the recent renewal of the planning system and its present limited impact gives rise to a number of questions. Does the planning system need to be renewed again? Which planning tools can generate a bigger impact? In order to deal with these issues, in this paper we will be sketching the evolution of the planning system in Belgium/Flanders from a social perspective. In point 2 we will provide an outline of the essence of this perspective. Point 3 comprises a description of the major socio-economic changes after 1945. Point 4 links this to an overview of different groups of Belgian/Flemish planning tools. Point 5 provides a number of conclusions. In our conclusion we will argue (1) how planning tools are not value-free, but are used in a social struggle in a specific social context, (2) that a rehabilitation of the planning system and the linking thereof to the content and underlying values are more urgently necessary than a technical renewal and (3) that this requires a social repositioning of planning.

2.   A socio-political perspective on planning tools

In order to answer the questions regarding the renewal and the position of the existing planning system we will consider this planning system in its socio-economic and political context. To this end we will be using a socio-political perspective on planning tools. This means that social changes and the development of the tools mutually influence each other. On the one hand tools are the expression of underlying social processes. On the other hand tools also have their own dynamics, which influences social development.

Planning paradigms and planning tools are, consequently, embedded in a social-economic, administrative and ideological context. They are not only formed by this context, but at the

same time constitute it. There is an interaction in both directions. Tools can therefore never be considered or analysed as such. Their significance is also determined by their social position.

This means that tools can be used as a perspective. Social developments can be 'read' on the basis of the tools used. Conversely, the tools also have to function as a reading grid. Without underlying developments to be described, these tools are in fact an empty box. The analysis of tools as such will lead to the drawing up of all types of typologies and overviews, but does not provide an insight into their real meaning.

An analysis of Flemish/Belgian planning tools against a social background provides a global overview of the tool groups used, linked to the underlying social evolution. This clearly demonstrates the importance of the actors who are using the tools involved and the reasons why.

3.   Socio-political dynamics in the Flemish region after 1945

In literature the period after 1945 is, from a socio-economic point of view, generally described as a sub-period within capitalism during which the welfare state was developed, but later also (partially) dismantled again. The Western welfare system, which developed prior to the economic crisis of 1973, is sometimes also referred to as Fordistic. Typical characteristics of this period include: economic growth, the development of mass production, standardisation, the development of mass consumption and strong state intervention with a view to supporting the aforementioned processes. In the 1960s, in particular, state intervention in Belgium was strongly developed as an '*exceptionally comprehensive complex of institutions, arrangements and agreements, which together constitute the Belgian variant of the Keynesian state*' (Witte & Meynen, 2006):82. Characteristics included the development of social security, health care and education, the implementation of infrastructure works, the drawing up of economic restoration or expansion plans and the implementation of the economic expansion laws. The economic crisis was followed by an unstable period, during which our socio-economic system evolved from a Fordistic to a post-Fordistic model. Under the influence of worldwide free trade accords production evolved to a more flexible production, moved to regions with cheaper labour (as is evident from the long series of mergers and company closures) and a shift was operated to a more service-based economy. Information and communication technology (ICT) accelerated this evolution.

In accordance with the Fordistic welfare model, corporatist decision-making trajectories were developed within the political parties and their connected sociopolitical groups (supported by absolute majorities). Policies were elaborated within these parties, in which all actors organised themselves and discussions were held. In order to streamline mass production and mass consumption a task-oriented and vertical (sectoral) administration was developed. A rational-comprehensive planning started working with socially determined objectives, with professional planners, who chose the 'correct' so-called value-free tools like master plans, structure plans and land-use or zoning plans. Once again, since the oil crisis and under the influence of socio-economic trends this method of policy implementation floundered, which of course raised the necessary tensions. Absolute majorities gradually disappeared. One-issue action groups reacted to new social issues, for which there was no appropriate course of action within the political parties. As a result, they came about and acted outside the parties. Even at present there is no clear social response to this. Important for Belgium/Flanders are the successive state reforms, which regulated the country's regionalisation and a total redistribution of competences (Albrechts, 2001). Here again the tension between the former party-specific decision-making trajectories and the origin of new arenas (referred to as networks by some) interferes. This also applies to the administrative organisation. While new administrative coalitions are created, the public administration is still organised in a mainly Fordistic (sectoral) manner and the number of sectoral tools continues to increase. Gradually new and more flexible tools are being developed, reflections about horizontal public services

are organised and attention for new ways of involving the 'civil society' in policy-making and implementation are on the increase. However, all these actions collide with an increasingly stronger neo-liberal ideology, which is in favour of a much more market-oriented type of policy with a slimmed-down public administration, a separation between policy-making and implementation and the outsourcing of tasks. As a result of these evolutions there currently are different policy types and thus also different types of tools. This is connected with the underlying vision of society.

The (cultural) evolution as regards visions of society, theories and discourses can be described (in a simplified manner) based on the social struggle between a whole range of conformist (confirmation and reproduction of existing power relations) and reformist (transformation of existing power relations) visions, theories and discourses. The awareness of this struggle is essential to gain an insight in the causes of the problem regarding the policy tools. It touches on who uses which tools and why. Although this requires a much more refined analysis, generally speaking, one might say that in the period after 1945 there was a shift from a social-democratic vision of society to a more neo-liberal one. This fits in with an international evolution since the 1980s, which increasingly thinks of the market as the only allocation principle, which resulted in the liberalisation of world trade (with the GATT and WTO agreements), the downfall of communism, the development of multinationals, the paring down of the government administration, the dominance of the Anglo-Saxon liberal model ('Reaganomics', 'Thatcherism'). In Belgium/Flanders this led to purple (socialists and liberals) governments during the period between 1999 and 2007. Although Belgium/Flanders has a strong social tradition and the belief in the moderating function of the government continues to be relatively strong, this evolution is for example obvious from the shift in policy style. The recent administrative reform in Flanders is the expression of a neo-liberal vision and accompanying policy style, characterised by a separation between policy-making and implementation, a subordinate role of the administrations as regards implementation, the outsourcing of tasks to subordinate administrations and to the market. This for example expresses itself in an increase in the number of management agreements as a tool to control subcontracting, a reduced belief in collective learning processes (such as advocated in strategic/structure planning), more freedom for companies and citizens (less plans, more permits, decline of the permit duty), belief in the measurability of policy (with various types of impact reports and policy assessment tools), etc. As is the case at administrative level, new visions, theories and discourses can never be a fully-fledged substitute of the former ones and several different types co-exist at any time. Consequently, this also holds true for those tools that are preferably used based on the different visions, as well as for the planning theories applied (whether implicitly or not). The neo-liberal discourse, for example, refers (implicitly) to elements of the rational-comprehensive planning theory and tries to encapsulate the emerging structure planning - which fits in rather with a collaborative tradition. This, for example, also leads to conflicting visions on the position and use of a tool such as zoning or land-use plans in a planning process. Finally (but not in the least) the strong rise of the sustainability discourse since the 1970s (May '68?) must be mentioned here. This, for example, led to the development of a strong nature sector and an increasing influence of the European level on the tools used.

4.   Evolution of planning and development tools in the Flemish region after 1945

As mentioned before, the social evolution can be derived from the evolution of the tools used. On the other hand an overview of tools must be seen against the background of social evolution. From this it appears that different sets of tools can be defined. In order to simplify matters, we will for the time being distinguish a number of main periods and traditions for Belgium/Flanders, in which somewhat cohesive groups of tools can be identified. These are related to different groups of actors, different objectives and different development models. Thus in Belgium/Flanders, since 1945 we have seen (1) sector planning in a Fordistic, sectorally organised and party-specific socio-economic context, (2) land-use planning as a

complement (and possibly also as an element) of sector planning, (3) strategic planning in a context of eroding Fordism and emerging sustainability discourses, (4) community development aimed at emancipation and psycho-social change, (5) project management in a post-Fordistic liberalising context and (6) experiments with integrated area development and alternative local development.

Sectoral tools and Fordism

A first group of tools that stands out, and which one is confronted with when implementing strategic planning and projects, includes the sectoral tools (for an introduction, seee.g. (Van Wesenbeek, 2006) for example). In the past ten years the tools in this field have increased considerably. Various policy sectors have created new tools. With the Nature Decree (1997), the Forest Decree (1990), the Soil Sanitation Decree (1995) and the Decree regarding Integral Water Management (2003), among other things, the sectors of nature, forest and the environment created subsidies, nature design plans, forest compensations, environmental permits, the environmental impact study (both for projects and plans), soil certificates, safety reports, water assessments, environmental policy plans, etc. The economic sector (in the broad sense) introduced, among other initiatives, the Subsidy Decree (2003), the Act regarding the permits for commercial establishments (the so-called Ikea Act 2003), subsidies and procedures for the development of industrial estates, science parks and business centres, uses layout plans, land division plans and management plans, draws up sales conditions, management agreements, management structures, uses the social-economic permit, etc. The mobility sector has a framework for mobility plans, parking plans, mobility covenants, an audit committee, urban designs, implementation plans, mobility impact report, subsidies, etc. with the Decree on Mobility Covenants (2001). The same enumeration can be given for the agricultural sector, for housing, tourism and recreation, heritage and landscape, etc.

The sectoral evolution becomes also clear from the number of policy plans enforced by the Flemish Government (since 1990) on municipalities. The Policy Research Centre Administrative Organisation Flanders (Pauwels & Van Gool, 2006) evaluated the policy plans which municipalities are obliged to draw up. For 2005 these included: the general policy programme, the strategic multiannual programme, the multiannual financial policy plan, the local social policy plan, the multiannual plan for public social welfare centres, the municipal spatial structure plan, the municipal housing needs study, the signposting plan, the environmental policy plan and the environmental programme, the plan for the reception and processing of ship waste, the zonal safety plan, the equal opportunities plan, the church organisation plan. Besides there are still a lot of other optional plans.

The development of the sectoral tools goes back to the development of the Fordistic-Keynesian welfare state after 1945, aimed at mass production and mass consumption. This went hand in hand with a sectorally developed society and public administration, the outcome of which is the multiplicity of sectoral tools used today. Sectors continued to develop new tools all the time depending on their own (task-oriented) logic. This is also confirmed by the analysis by Ryckewaert and Theunis (Ryckewaert & Theunis, 2006) of post-war urbanisation in Belgium. They show how the housing policy, the economic policy and the infrastructure policy - with the accompanying tools and projects - have shaped Belgium's spatial planning.

The roots of the sectoral planning system explain why the evolution toward additional legislation with additional tools has probably not come to an end yet. The Flemish Government's ambition to slow down the growth of the number of tools used (such as, for example, was operationalised with the establishment of a law moderation unit) does not seem to have a big chance of success, unless this would be combined with organisational changes. The recent Flemish administrative reform is a perfect illustration of this. It does not change sectoral logic at all and even increases the number of policy domains (see the documentation in the framework of 'better managerial governance' (beter bestuurlijk beleid),

www.vlaanderen.be/bb). In the meantime all kinds of links have been established between the various sectoral legislations and tools (see (Laga, Idea consult & Studiegroep Omgeving, 2005)). The creation of links is a logical expression of the pursuit of more influence by the various sectors. This does, however, seriously hamper the realisation of joint projects.

The sectoral organisation of society has resulted in impressive projects in the past, such as land consolidations, industrial estates, additional residential areas, motorways, ports, canals, etc. In the period between 1945 and 1975 tools and projects related to housing (housing premium - de Taeye Act, subsidising of infrastructure - Brunfaut Act), economic expansion (tax exemption, government subsidies - economic expansion laws) and infrastructure (road fund for the building of motorways, ten-year plan for the Port of Antwerp, Canal Act), were used in order to ensure a uniform development of the different regions of Belgium and the slowing down of the centralist growth of the cities (Ryckewaert & Theunis, 2006). Moreover, this was expressed in a number of more or less integrated projects. During this period projects were still developed as more or less integrated projects, as the implementation of the underlying vision of decentralised urbanisation.

After 1975 the disadvantages of sectoral organisation became increasingly obvious. different activities could be localised increasingly anywhere in the country and housing, economy and infrastructure resulted in separate projects: the so-called fermette-style allotment, the isolated industrial estate or SME zone. Specific tools were developed and increasingly aimed at the issuing and checking of permits. The issue of horizontal coordination arised as one of the most important stumbling blocks (for an illustration based on the many (sectoral) policy plans see (Pauwels & Van Gool, 2006)).

The formal planning tools - land-use planning

A second group of tools is made up of formal planning tools, as included in the Decree of 18 May 1999 governing spatial planning. At first glance the decree introduced a number of important changes compared to the Urban Development Act of 29 March 1962. Introduction of the spatial structure plan, modernisation of the land-use plan, introduction of a similar planning for three policy levels, adjustments to the permit system, granting more autonomy to the municipalities, the introduction of plan benefits, the announcement of a land policy, etc. are only a few of the important changes. Ordinances, expropriation plan, building lines plan, allotment permit, and town planning certificate are other important tools.

In contrast with the seemingly important changes we would like to argue that the formal tools have not changed essentially. The formal planning tools were and still are a permit system aimed at checking what is allowed and what is not allowed (Saey, 2003). The system of land-use plans at various government levels, ordinances, the entire civil service and the permit system are aimed at testing projects against plans and possibly issuing a permit. Although the objectives were quite different and with a view to introducing a more dynamic and implementation-oriented planning, the spatial structure plan has also been introduced in this system since 1997 (planning decree). The drawing up of such a plan was enforced on all policy levels, an entire system of administrative control was set up by the Flemish administration (including a circular with demands as regards content for the structure plan, structural consultation, plenary meeting), the monitoring of the 'space accounting system', which is included in the spatial structure plan for Flanders, became one of the most important activities of the Flemish administration, development perspectives for almost every possible (sectoral) development had to be included in the structure plan. Albrechts once coined the term 'regional plan in words' to describe this evolution (see (Albrechts, 2006):1156 about the tendency towards control in traditional spatial planning). The spatial structure plan was reduced to a preparation for the drawing up of land-use plans, which in turn served as the basis for the granting of a permit. Another factor which played a role was the spatial approach, which was made absolute (with for example only purely spatial decisions being allowed).

Moreover, the organisation of the formal planning tools is fully aimed at creating legal security. The core of legal security is also very clearly visible in jurisdiction, which has grafted itself onto the formal planning tools and which has repeatedly argued in favour of uniform land-use plans. This has led to an ongoing discussion between planners and lawyers, but also with the numerous sectors and private actors regarding the nature of the land-use plans. The discussion regarding flexibility and legal security is embedded in a legal, administrative and political complex, with an ensuing social struggle regarding the land-use plans. Due to this embedding in the social system a change in the current orientation of the planning tools towards legal security is rather improbable or even impossible. The ongoing discussion regarding the increased flexibility of the new generation of land-use plans (the spatial implementation plans) is a perfect illustration of this.

Thirdly, formal planning tools can be considered as a component of the development of the Keynesian welfare state and of its accompanying sectoral tools. Saey indicates how Minister Vanaudenhove (1954 - 1961) viewed spatial planning as an economic project. This was aimed at economic development on the one hand, but on the other hand also at a '*better geographic distribution of the companies, an adequate road network, a general improvement of living, housing and family benefits that are better adapted to the conditions in the region, a better return on operational expenditure of public administration services, and the realisation of public works*' (Saey, 2003):52. This probably explains why the Urban Development Act took until 29 March 1962 to be approved. The ideas for setting up a planning system at different levels with a matching permit system already date back to the early twentieth century (Janssens, 1985). Moreover, in the meantime several attempts were undertaken – both at the end of the 1930s and in the early 1950s – to arrive at a legislation. These attempts always proved to be unsuccessful. In 1962, however, the time had come to enforce far-reaching government intervention. The Urban Development Act and specifically article 13 (decree of 22 October 1996) or article 39 (decree of 18 May 1999) pertaining to the right of the government to intervene in property law form part of this.

Strategic spatial planning – different tool groups?

The rise of strategic planning and its tools have been extensively covered in international and Flemish literature (Albrechts, Alden, Da Rosa Pires & (eds.), 2001; Healey, Khakee, Motte & Needham, 1997; Salet & Faludi, 2000) (also refer to the many manuals for drawing up strategic plans). As a reaction to the static (rational-comprehensive) land-use planning planners went in search of more dynamic and action-oriented forms of planning. According to Albrechts (Albrechts, 2004) this is a '*socio-spatial process, led by the public sector, which produces a vision, actions and resources for implementation, which frame and form what is and can become a place*'. According to Albrechts strategic planning is selective, relational and inclusive, integrating, vision-building and action-oriented (Albrechts, 2006).

In Flanders a typical Flemish type of planning, the so-called structure planning or three-track planning, was developed from the 1970s onwards (Van den Broeck, 2004; Van den Broeck, Verschure & Esho, 2004; Albrechts & Van den Broeck, 2004; Albrechts, Van den Broeck, Verachtert, Leroy & Van Tatenhove, 1999; Studiegroep Omgeving, 1993; Vermeersch & Houthaeve, 1994; Van den Broeck, 1987). Here planning is described as a dynamic process, on three tracks, in which vision-building, the implementation of specific actions and consultation and communication run parallel and are linked to one another. Tools such as SWOT analysis, process design, actor analysis, needs assessment, location assessments, research by design, strategic choices and strategic policy plans were added to the formal planning tools. The process component was strongly developed in strategic planning.

At the moment, the social position of strategic spatial planning and the significance of the tools used are rather ambiguous. On the one hand one might argue that strategic spatial planning in Flanders was originally related to an underlying ecological project, in the framework of May '68 and the criticism on the unbridled economic growth of Fordism. The decline of open space, fragmented urbanisation, nature values that came under threat, the

unbridled increase of mobility paired with the decreasing environmental quality were only a few of the main issues. In this case the method was developed in a context of eroding Fordism and an emerging sustainability discourse. It was aimed at creating ecological stability, democratic decision-making, social emancipation and collective learning.

On the other hand strategic planning may also be considered as a value-free (and thus power-endorsing) method. In the past fifteen years the process approach was developed using elements from public administration and facilitating process management aimed at arriving at a consensus: organising in stages, process design, actor analysis, setting up arenas, drawing up agreements and package deals. This is evident from the rise of process managers as facilitators and from the influence of, for example, Dutch and Flemish public administration experts on literature about strategic planning, process and project management (De Bruijn, ten Heuvelhof, Kickert, Bouckaert etc.). Saey illustrates this as follows in his analysis of integrated area-oriented policy. '*Zonder kennis van het maatschappelijk actieveld achter de collaboratieve planning blijft het onduidelijk of geïntegreerd gebiedsgericht beleid daadwerkelijk een stap in de richting van velddemocratische besluitvorming heeft gezet. Een neo-liberale invulling behoort nog steeds tot de mogelijkheden.*' (Without knowledge of the field of social action behind the collaborative planning it remains unclear whether integrated area-oriented policy effectively has moved toward field-democratic decision-making. A neo-liberal interpretation is still one of the possibilities) (Saey, 2003):59 It is perfectly possible to pursue a strategic planning process in which participation is mainly applicable to project developers, building promoters and other hard economic sectors. In that case strategic planning does not contribute to a transformation of the existing balance of power and its innovative capacity is limited.

The above means that depending on the underlying ideology and the social context strategic planning tools can be quite diverse. This becomes also clear from the aforementioned integration of the spatial structure plan in the formal planning tools, in which it was demonstrated how the original intentions disappeared in an administrative-juridical complex. Albrechts illustrates this in an analysis of nine strategic plans in European and Australian cities. It appears that many of the plans and processes analysed are not very strategic (Albrechts, 2006). The fact that politicians' logic is not easily compatible with the idea of long-term planning is one of the elements that play a role here. Many municipal politicians also tend to ignore the municipal plans or at any rate only use them when it suits their purposes.

Community development

The tools for community development and neighbourhood development can be described as a very specific, typical tradition, with its own views on realising (strategic) projects. In general this is about stimulating local emancipatory processes. Community development relates to the '*implementation of social-agogical interventions with a view to bringing about psycho-social changes and solving community issues*'. According to Desmet the core of the social-agogical approach in community development is '*to offer people channels for social participation, to offer them the opportunity to step into the public sphere, to cooperate with their peers and to exercise a certain influence on the decisions that concern them*' (Baert, De Bie, Desmet, Van Elslander & Verbeke, 2003):14. Community development should contribute to more social capital and more social cohesion. It wants to involve people in a constructive manner in society. It is aimed at improving the social position of (underprivileged) people and groups, improving the relations between population groups among each other and between population groups and institutions, increasing the participation of citizens. To this end community development tries to bring about and encourage civil initiative, to raise awareness among people about social issues, to help people organise themselves and to provide support when developing and implementing change strategies. Community development stimulates all types of social and political participation and is characterised by a strong local approach. Community development must thus be in direct contact with the population. It must be able to mobilise experience-based knowledge which is present among the parties involved and to inspire citizens to undertake organised efforts.

Although community development initially tied in with the post-war ideal of progress and was aimed at eliminating socio-economic disadvantages, it is most often associated with the social-critical movement of the 1970s (Baert et al., 2003; Vermeersch & Houthaeve, 1994). During this period community development paid a lot of attention to the mechanisms of social discrimination, to a broad social reform and the democratisation of society while questioning the existing power structures. These are still important points for attention today. They have, however, come under pressure as a result of an increased objectivisation. The emphasis today is shifting – as is the case in other fields – towards achieving tangible short-term results in the form of specific solutions for collective problems at local level (poverty, all types of discimination, lack of social cohesion). In the intermediate period (1980s and 1990s) community development was subject to several different government programmes. Examples include the Flemish Fund for the Integration of the Underprivileged (Vlaams Fonds voor de Integratie van Kansarmen/VFIK), the Social Impulse Fund (Sociaal Impulsfonds/SIF, 1996-2000), safety contracts, social urban renewal. In the meantime the sector has been thoroughly restructured.

Community development tools are strongly centred on participation and emancipation. Thus a number of methods were developed aimed at citizen participation. The 'Lens Method' (Leefbaarheidsanalyse Nieuwe Stijl (Viability Analysis New Style)) is a type of viability survey which is conducted in city districts together with the inhabitants. The method also comprises the devising of solutions and measures according to a number of future scenarios. The 'Werkgroep 2000' method also analyses neighbourhoods in collaboration with their residents, but this time based on the gathering of data, discussions, walks through the neighbourhood, the drawing of a street map. Brainstorming and the devising of start-up projects are also part of this method. DIP or 'Doelgerichte Interventieplanning' (Targeted Intervention Planning) is a compact analysis and planning method, which includes a definition of the problem, an analysis and a planning phase. A card system is used. 'Planning for Real' takes account of the communicative disadvantage of people and therefore makes use of visual tools such as scale models, maps, a magazine. During the process the 'driving forces' in a community are searched for. The 'Deventer-wijk' approach is aimed at achieving a better relationship between the authorities and the inhabitants and at increasing the number of active resident groups. The approach is based on the existing community initiatives and a neighbourhood budget that is at the disposal of the residents. Based on a survey conducted among the inhabitants an action programme is drawn up, that is partially implemented using the neighbourhood budget. 'Dorp Inzicht' (Village Insight) is a method used in rural development, aimed at an investigation of the local living conditions by the inhabitants and at the implementation of targeted actions. A manual, a professional questionnaire and processing software support the research and planning, which are executed by the participating residents (Koning Boudewijnstichting/King Baudouin Foundation, 1996; Baert et al., 2003).

The fundamental orientation towards the needs and questions of inhabitants, the focus on emancipation, the development of social capital, the explicit attention for underprivileged groups, the critical questioning of discrimination mechanisms and of the existing balance of power are the strong points of community development. But it also presents some disadvantages. Basing oneself on the questions and desires of inhabitants has often resulted in considerable disappointment. Often the fact that tangible results failed to materialise contrasted hugely with the major efforts made by the inhabitants. This is inherent in this method, as emancipation is an objective in itself and some feel that community development should not necessarily have to lead to tangible physical results. Secondly, community development has sometimes led to considerable fragmentation of the available resources. This, for example, is one of the comments that are often addressed when discussing the SIF programme. This also expresses itself in a kind of sectoral fragmentation. Employment programmes exist alongside training programmes, health programmes, social-cultural work, youth work, etc.

Introduction of project management in a context of neo-liberalisation

An analysis of the tools used in a number of recently realised, ongoing and prepared projects in a number of Flemish cities reveals some recurring patterns. Discussions and project presentations in Leuven, Ghent, Ostend, Antwerp and Turnhout show how project management tools are on the rise from the 1990s onwards and in the present decade. This includes the careful delineation and isolation of projects from their surroundings, the appointment of project managers, the design of process schemes and the setting out of milestones, the creation of consultation structures with central stakeholders, facilitating research-by-design and the organisation of design competitions, the drawing up of project definitions, the establishment of agreements with stakeholders, the use of financial tools (calculation models) with a view to distributing costs and benefits, the creation of public municipal agencies as semi-autonomous development corporations, the setting up of public private partnerships, the drawing up of agreements with developers (including, for example, the application of the right of building), the creation of a (public) real estate portfolio (acquisition/expropriation, development and sale of land and properties) and the development of models for monitoring government efficiency. This becomes also clear from the success of a number of real estate training courses.

A number of projects also includes an extensive (and often innovative) communication programme. In the framework of these programmes information is provided to inhabitants by way of newsletters, publications, TV programmes and press releases, information meetings are held, sometimes purely for information purposes, but often also interactive (workshops, brainstorming sessions, etc.) and different types of events are organised (exhibitions, parties, walks, etc.). These programmes, too, play a role in the project management of strategic projects. They are essentially aimed at raising support for a project and serve as a 'public relations' programme intended to inform the population, with a view to ensuring a smoother implementation of the project.

In the meantime the development of a project management approach for strategic projects is being professionalised in a number of cities. Ghent, Antwerp, Ostend and Leuven not only created semi-autonomous municipal agencies, but they also worked hard at reforming their administrations, replacing sectoral operation with more project-based operation. The reform of the Flemish public administration (completed in 2006) was also implemented with a view to ensuring a more independent operation of a number of components of the administration. The sectoral logic, however, was entirely maintained. Here and there steps are being taken to increase project-based operation, for example in the case of city policy, which tried to concentrate a number of funds of other administrations. The evolution towards a more project-based approach is also evident in the VLM (Vlaamse Landmaatschappij - Flemish Land Agency).

According to Moulaert, Rodriguez en Swyngedouw the evolution toward a stronger project-based approach is related to the 'new (neo-liberal) economic policy', developed since the 1973 oil crisis, specifically in the 1980s and 1990s (Moulaert, Rodriguez & Swyngedouw, 2003). This includes trends of deregulation, privatisation, flexibilisation of the labour market and spatial decentralisation. This expresses itself in an urban policy aimed at creating new urban coalitions, a shift from a social to a more economic policy, the support of economic activity, selective deregulation and city marketing. Large-scale 'urban development projects' shape this policy and thus the neo-liberal globalisation processes. They are aimed at stimulating economic growth and organising (technical) innovation. Planning by projects replaces the classic policy tools of the Fordistic era. This also becomes evident in the (Dutch) plea in favour of replacing the existing permit planning by a development planning (Dammers, Verwest, Staffhorst & Verschoor, 2004; VROM Council, 2004).

The development of a strong project-based approach in a number of cities has as a benefit a high level of implementation and a high efficiency and effectiveness of planning and policy. The high visibility of the results is very much appreciated by planners, politicians and parts of

the population. On the other hand (international) criticism also experiences a sharp increase (Loopmans, 2006; Moulaert et al., 2003; Saey, 2001). Many of the projects realised turn out to be prestige projects, characterised by a lack of democratic control (replacement of representative democracy by a 'stakeholder urban governance'), limited accessibility of arenas (especially for weak groups), social exclusion and gentrification (a necessary consequence of the inevitable price increases of real estate, coupled with the necessary return on investment), adverse effects on redistribution mechanisms (shift of resources to public projects), financing of private development with public means (the public sector takes the early risks, the private sector only takes part in projects once guarantees regarding added value have been given), subordination of the programme to the demands of the real estate market (with shifts in the course of the process towards the most profitable functions such as offices, middle-class dwellings and commercial functions and towards larger densities). Such projects do not or barely contribute to the local development of the existing inhabitants and companies. They replace the existing functions with new ones, and as such are mainly physical real estate operations, which do not contribute to a physical, social, economic, cultural transformation of the area involved.

The aforementioned criticisms can be remediated to a certain extent. Strong contract agreements with the private sector, financial control by the government and the use of calculation models, systems of open bookkeeping, value capturing (urban planning costs) or compensation tools can protect the public interest.

Experiments with integrated area development and alternative local development

Next to the more large-scale projects discussed, with project management characteristics, we also note a different type of (experimental) strategic projects in Belgium/Flanders. Examples include the Buda island in Courtrai (Kortrijk) (local culture as a motor for local development), the red-light district in Antwerp (very diverse tools used, weak local community), Brugse Poort in Ghent (small-scale projects at neighbourhood level), Spoor Noord in Antwerp (strong involvement of residents), the area surrounding De Coninckplein in Antwerp (combination of multiple programmes and projects, limited gentrification, weak local community), neighbourhood contracts in Brussels (integrated approach, not only physical transformation), Trefil Arbed in Ghent (industrial estate for local economic development, strong involvement of residents and local entrepreneurs), Penitentienenstraat in Louvain (Leuven) (small-scale local development, integrated approach, various tools). These are all projects that (partially) capitalise on the local development potential in a more or less integrated manner.

We can probably relate this type of project with the ideas and practices regarding neighbourhood and district development as developed in Flanders during the 1990s, and which in turn constitute the sequel to urban renewal (1977 - 1993). Baelus, De Corte en Nieuwinckel in (De Decker, Hubeau & Nieuwinckel, 1996), for instance, describe experiments regarding neighbourhood and district development in Antwerp and Brussels. In Antwerp these initiatives were rooted in the operation of the Buurtontwikkelingsmaatschappij (BOM, or Neighbourhood Development Company from 1990), in Brussels in the first neighbourhood contracts (from 1994). The ideas regarding neighbourhood and district development were bundled in a manual by the King Baudouin Foundation (Koning Boudewijnstichting, 1996). The manual comprises chapters on planning (neighbourhood development plan), organisation and administrative innovation (governance), resident participation (essential for neighbourhood development), network building (social, professional and policy networks), neighbourhood analysis (built-up environment, social aspects, economic aspects, institutional aspects, location aspects), the spatial development perspective and policy evaluation. The importance of the social aspect is emphasised, but this is only one part of an integrated approach, in which the other aforementioned elements, too, play an essential role.

The ideas and practices of neighbourhood and district development can be seen against the emergence of theories regarding alternative local development and innovation, which are contrasted against the (post-)Keynesian redistribution policy (see above) and the neo-classic (neo-liberal) vision of globalisation, liberalisation and new economic and urban policies (see above). Authors such as Moulaert, Martinelli, Nussbaumer, Sekia, Hamdouch and others identify a number of building blocks - such as endogenous development, networking, evolution and learning, governance, community culture - for an alternative theory of local innovation (Moulaert, 2000; Moulaert, Martinelli & Swyngedouw, 2005b; Moulaert & Nussbaumer, 2005a; Nussbaumer & Moulaert, 2004; Moulaert, Martinelli & Swyngedouw, 2005a). The theory is based on the local potential for development. An integrated area development must not be aimed at economic growth and market development, but rather must focus on the renewal of existing social networks, on community development and on satisfying basic needs in the area. The aim is to increase ecological, social, human and business capital.

Alternative local development projects are also described in literature as socially innovative projects (Klein & Harrisson, 2007). These are projects, which (1) realise a sustainable renewal of the existing social networks in a given area, (2) in which the decision-making mechanisms of various actors involved (public, civil, private) are given a chance, (3) which coincide with a collective learning process and (4) which strike a new balance between sub-cultures (Moulaert & Nussbaumer, 2005b). Socially innovative projects therefore associate planning tools and project management tools with emancipatory tools. They are not merely physical but integrate spatial transformation with employment aspects, health care, training projects, cultural initiatives, social work, etc. (depending on the case) and bring about an endogenous local development. Purely real estate operations do not meet these criteria as they replace existing networks with other external networks. They do not achieve sustainable spatial and social innovation in the area involved.

5.   Conclusions - towards a rehabilitation and repositioning of planning tools

Tool struggles

The aforementioned groups of tools tend to simplify reality. On the one hand this is useful and necessary in order to compare the position of spatial planning (tools) with other developmental visions and tool sets. Only in this way can we gain an insight in the social position of spatial planning and thus of its object, method and tools. There exists indeed a relationship between social position and object (Saey, 2001).

On the other hand, in principle, a more detailed analysis of the tool groups, their underlying ideologies and actors and their social positions is also necessary. Firstly, different actors, with a different logic - for example politicians, planners, the administration, cabinets, civil society, the private sector - always use different tools. Secondly there are complex interrelations between the aforementioned tools. Project management tools are partially included in strategic planning. The formal planning tools are required to translate planning insights into the legal-administrative world and in turn influence planning processes. A combination of sectoral tools and the accompanying resources is often required in order to realise projects. Emancipation and participation benefit from a lot of attention in strategic planning (Albrechts, 2002; Albrechts, 2003; Friedmann, 1992). Conversely, strategic planning has penetrated community development to a large extent. Thirdly, the various tools and underlying developmental visions all co-exist, even within one and the same strategic project. Fourthly, tools that were developed within one particular logic also surface in other logics, where they are de facto converted into other tools with other effects. Tools from previous and parallel paradigms remain in existence, regardless of the reigning planning paradigm or the socio-economic context. Tools do have their own dynamic after all. And finally the balance of power is also essential. Actors will try to enforce their tools within a process and will try to block their opponents' tools or even eliminate them.

The jumble of planning paradigms, planning practices, socio-economic, political and ideological developments, actors, discourses, each with their own tools, is also related to the implementation issue. Various types of implementation indeed occur within one and the same project. This is also confirmed in public policy and administration literature (Hill & Hupe, 2002; Voets & De Rynck, 2004). It is important however to note that this is not a neutral fact. Different types of implementation are not merely connected with context variables such as the number and interdependence of actors, but also and possibly mainly with the actors involved, with their values, ideologies and social positions. The question is therefore: which (and whose) tools are involved in the project and why?

Toward a rehabilitation of planning tools

The outlining of a number of Belgian/Flemish spatial planning and development tools against a socio-economic and political background gives rise to questions regarding the sense of merely developing new planning tools. The analysis for example shows how strategic spatial planning has developed its tools through professionalisation, but as a result has also developed an instrumental neutrality. The emphasis on developing process management techniques and the liberalising context, which supported this to a large extent, has turned strategic planning into a power-neutral process. This creates a fundamental problem, as strategic planning claims that it aims to transform the existing situation. It also contradicts the above conclusion that there is no such thing as value-free tools.

This becomes all the more clear from the confrontation with recent experiments of alternative local development. It would seem that these tools tie in with the ideas and practices of neighbourhood and district development of the 1990s, but also with the roots of strategic planning in Flanders and that similar practices are also being developed abroad. By deducing a number of important characteristics from these experiments, it would seem that, rather than a renewal, this constitutes a rehabilitation of a number of characteristics of planning tools.

A first characteristic of early strategic planning (tools) in Flanders and of current experiments - which should be rehabilitated – is the value-laden approach aimed at improving the position of weaker groups and functions. Such planning always has an underlying ecological and social aim and will safeguard this throughout the entire process. The ecological and social objective will differentiate it from pure process management, which is on everybody's lips these days. Only in this case will a planning process break through the existing balance of power. This is also necessary for a social innovation, which goes beyond the physical transformation and which as a result also has an emancipatory effect.

A second characteristic to be rehabilitated is the local embedding of a planning process and of planning tools. Future-oriented planning tools capitalise on the local development potential. This can be very diverse and can include local cultural potential, the potential of local entrepreneurs or the putting to good use of ethnic entrepreneurship. In the future tools will have to be developed to track down and to stimulate local innovation potential (social venture capital?). This situation differs completely from the one in which support is generated using all kinds of 'public relations' tools. In Flanders residential protest plays an important role in this, but other types of civil involvement are also being developed. Local development sets out from local potential and endogenous innovation as a starting point, rather than from governmental logic, the logic of process management, and not necessarily from the logic of prosperous newcomers. The development of local innovation potential is a long-term process, in contrast with project management.

A third characteristic to be rehabilitated is the realisation of a balance between, on the one hand, giving sufficient space to different types of logic, perspectives and resources, and, on the other hand, integrating these. On the one hand, future-oriented planning tools leave space for public, civil and private logic and its intermediary forms. It creates an alternation of 'open' stages, which leave space for conflict, civil initiative and innovation and more 'closed' stages of professionalisation, strategic planning and management, which by definition

exclude a whole lot of actors, but which are essential for accelerating the process and for obtaining tangible results. On the other hand it stimulates an interaction between cultural, social, economic and spatial development. Examples include the integration of culture and space, of social policy, health and living, employment, culture and education, etc. The objective is to combine physical interventions (the construction of the public domain, the renovation of dwellings) with social aims (training, creating employment) and economic development (setting up business centres, granting micro-credits). The objective is not the simultaneous implementation of actions aimed at employment, training, social services, the public domain, etc. but the concentration on one field of action to achieve progress in another field, which will then be linked in turn with yet another field. In the ideal case physical transformation (renovation of dwellings, construction of the public domain) will be used to train low-skilled workers, who can then work on other renovation projects or in one of the business centres created, etc. The use of different types of tools, their mutual adaptation, the concentration of resources on one single project and the mobilisation of internal and external resources can also be mentioned here.

Toward a social repositioning of planning tools

Putting the emphasis on the characteristics of the planning tools that need to be rehabilitated is insufficient however. In order again to increase the impact of spatial planning, the social position of planning and planning tools in Flanders needs to change. The above analysis, based on a coupling of different planning tools with the social, economic and political context, explains why planning tools today are heavily distorted, as a result of which they no longer embody their original intent and barely have any impact in Flanders. In order to examine this further, more research is needed. At any rate this conclusion contradicts literature, which promotes the further development of strategic planning as the pre-eminent solution for the crisis in spatial planning.

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