



Shaping Regional Futures Mapping, Designing, Transforming!

A conference on the performance of regional design

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Shaping Regional Futures

Conference Documentation

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1 Introduction



1.1 The Conference

The aim of the conference ‘Shaping regional futures’ was to **clarify the performance of regional design**: the way imagining and envisioning of spatial futures of regions **enhances planning** on regional and supra-regional levels of scale. Seen from this perspective, regional design is a search for planning solutions which combines **analytical, political and organisational reasoning** with the aim of developing, challenging or refining planning frameworks while leaving ample freedom for interpretation. From an institutional perspective, regional design is a way to involve decision-makers, politicians, experts and the broader public in regional planning. Relationships among authors of regional designs and their audience are key for the performance of a practice that relies on imagination and representation of what is possible and desired.

In **numerous European regions** politicians, administrators, planning professionals, market and civil actors are experimenting with **design approaches** to overcome limitations that the statutory planning systems pose. They use design practice to indicate how growing spatial integration exceeds restricting administrative boundaries, and to demonstrate why and how such barriers should be overcome. Design practices in European regions, however, vary greatly. In some regions there is a strong design tradition while in other regions this is far less the case, although actors observe the design practices employed elsewhere with curiosity. Despite the broad interest which has emerged recently, **few lessons have been learnt** so far.

The joint conference of Technische Universität München and Delft University of Technology was an **occasion to compare regional design approaches** used in different European regions, to discuss the different facets and dimensions of these practices, and to assess their performance.

The conference was organized in **three sessions**. The first session focussed on a conceptual framework to identify the **performance** of regional design. The second session discussed **didactic** issues related to regional design and the challenges faced in teaching complex issues related to the regional scale (the discussion within this teaching session will be documented in a separate article). In the third session, particular **cases** of regional design practices in Europe were presented by planning and design experts engaged in these practices. This session was used to discuss the relevance and performance of regional design. A concluding plenary debate allowed for the comparison of the lessons learnt from each of the three case areas. The conference closed with a public panel discussion on the spatial future of the Munich Metropolitan Region including key players from politics as well as public administration.

1.2 Current regional design practice

In regions and metropolitan areas, municipal borders have long since been traversed and transcended by spatial patterns of interaction and land-use. In the emergence of spatial patterns, multiple spatial scales intertwine – from the neighborhood up to the functional region and beyond. Governments and their administrations often experience statutory limitations when trying to address these developments:

- Their **territories are fragments of regions**; they have difficulties detecting problems that are caused by factors outside of their spheres of influence and feel that addressing them is beyond their competence and political mandate.
- **Planning instruments** available to them, along with specific rules and regulations, are often **too generic, rigid and defensive** to address the specific development potentialities that are the product of intertwined issues and scales.
- Simultaneously, **analytical information** about **regional spatial development is increasing**, thanks to new technologies that can handle (big) data. More information and knowledge on what is going on beyond the horizon of a single city is not unproblematic, though. There is little experience about how to transform the insights and activities of single individuals and organizations into collective knowledge and action on a regional scale.

In response to these deficiencies of statutory planning, politicians, planning authorities and also civil and private organizations in many European regions are participating in governance arrangements, in order to coordinate sector issues and issues that play at different levels of scale. They seek, for instance, to integrate economic, transport and housing development, and water management stretching across multiple and multi-scalar boundaries. Being voluntary associations with few formal planning instruments available to them, the resulting partnerships collaboratively engage in jointly creating inspiring and encouraging spatial agendas with the help of regional design.

Design is a creative practice, orientated towards finding solutions to problems in the built (and unbuilt) environment. It is a ‘conversation with the situation’, driven by normative, desirable futures, and also by a wish to understand holistic wholes and dependencies among parts. To use such creative and comprehensive design-led approaches in planning often raises high expectations, usually associated with the intense use of spatial representation in design such as maps, models, and other geographic imagery:

- Representations of regional spatial development are seen to be **explanatory**; to increase understanding of interdependencies across scales and issues, and to focus attention on the places and locations that are affected.
- Representations of spatial agendas are seen to be **persuasive**; they provoke thoughts and feelings, and therefore the involvement of individuals and organizations in politics and planning.
- In the context of interactive design processes, visualizations and spatial representations are seen to be **platforms or dialogues**, malleable collections of spatial information that expose conflict, facilitate learning, and mediate in the context of complex governance settings.

Expectations are not always met, though, as was shown in various concrete cases.

1.3 Regional design cases

The conference 'Shaping Regional Futures' provided a platform for dialogue between experts from academia and practice. Its aim was to discuss the multiple expectations raised by regional design. Knowledge about the performance of regional design was collected through the joint analysis and discussion of three cases.

Amsterdam Region

San Verschuuren (Spatial Planning Department of the Municipality of Amsterdam), **Paul Gerretsen** (Deltametropolis Association) and **Jannemarie de Jonge** (Wing, Wageningen) reflected on how several regional design initiatives have influenced the formation of a vision of the so-called Amsterdam Metropolitan Region (MRA: Metropoolregio Amsterdam). The city of Amsterdam with its 820,000 inhabitants is surrounded by several small and medium-sized cities and towns. Greater Amsterdam has 1.5 million inhabitants. The Amsterdam region is part of the Randstad Holland, the western and economically most vital part of the Netherlands. Spatial development of the Amsterdam region is the policy objective of several authorities and partnerships, each with its own vision of the future of the area, the MRA partnership among them. MRA is an informal co-operation among 32 municipalities, two provinces, and one city region in the area. Its aim is to foster economic development and accessibility. It is common for sub-national governments and coalitions among them to use regional design in the Netherlands. They expect design-led approaches to help identify guiding principles for planning and also to clarify relations among governments.

Zürich Region

Wilhelm Natrup (Head of Spatial Development, Canton of Zürich), **Anna Schindler** (Head of Urban Development, City of Zürich) and **Martin Berchtold** (berchtoldkrass space & options) contemplated the making and use of the Metrobild Zürich design. The Zürich Metropolitan Area is Switzerland's leading economic region with 2-3 million inhabitants and 500 municipalities in 8 cantons. The region boasts a high quality of life, significant spatial diversity in a relatively small area, and a strong position as an international economic location. Major challenges are its dynamic growth, social disparity, strain on environment and resources, and cooperation and competition among municipalities and cantons. In 2010, the Zürich Metropolitan Area started the Metrobild process to visualise the area from the perspective of three different design teams. The goal was to create a common understanding of the functionalities, qualities, and potentialities of the Zürich Metropolitan Area.

Ruhr Region

Christa Reicher (Professor of Urban Design and Land-Use Planning at Dortmund University of Technology) and **Martin Tönnies** (Head of Planning, Ruhr Regional Association) reflected on Ideenwettbewerb Zukunft Metropole Ruhr. With 53 communities and 5.2 mio inhabitants in an area of 4,435 km², the Ruhr region is the 5th largest conurbation in Europe. The very polycentric region has been experiencing ongoing structural change since the 1960s, and managing decline and conversion will continue to form a major challenge in the coming decades. The Ruhr Regional Association is a municipally founded association, which has had its own legislative and regional planning powers since 2009. In order to create a statutory regional plan for the whole area, the association started a regional dialogue in 2011 – including an international design competition. The competition was seen as a new planning approach. Expectations were high: to get views from outside, strike out in a new direction, enable participation, establish transparency and openness, and initiate discussions and dialogues.

2 Propositions



The conference ‘Shaping Regional Futures’ proposed a systemic view of regional design. A preliminary conceptual framework provided initial positions to help structure the debate with the invited experts and practitioners. According to this framework, regional design is characterised by **three interrelated aspects**:

- The regional **setting** as the **specific context** any design endeavour is embedded in
- The **impact (performance)** of regional design on decision-making processes
- The distinction between the regional **design strategy** and the **design process**

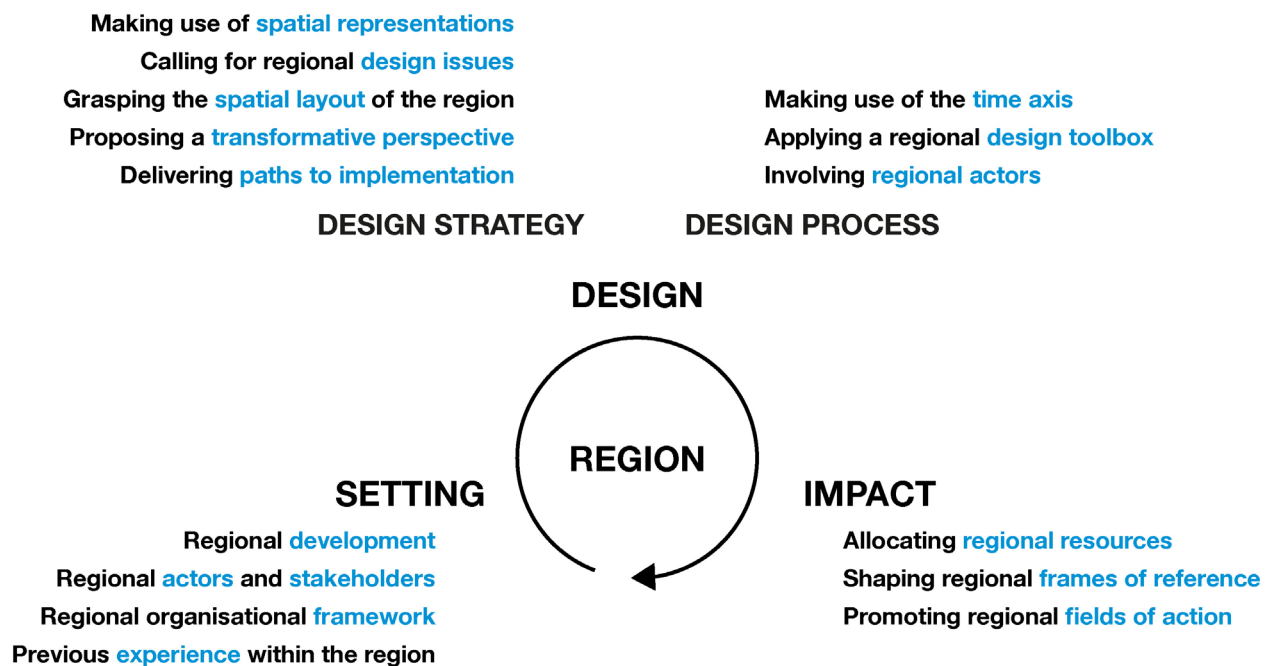


Figure 1:
Analytical framework for the discussion of the regional design case studies. For a more elaborate version, see Figure 8 at the end of this documentation.

This preliminary framework guided the discussion on the regional design case studies during the conference. The framework was neither supposed to be complete nor exclusive – it provided a discursive structure that was to be debated, complemented, and revised. It was intended to inspire a reordering, drawing on experience, presumptions and evidence from planning research, teaching and practice.

The initial framework was built on theoretical notions from the fields of planning and design, and is therefore in need of empirical support. The discussions at the conferences were used to test the validity of the framework.

Regional Design: What kind of setting?

Regional design takes place in a setting where a whole range of boundaries are becoming less distinct. ‘Fuzziness’ is probably an appropriate term here: It can be connected to spatial boundaries, but also boundaries between actors and different kinds of knowledge. Spatially, it is virtually impossible to demarcate ‘the’ region. Places have multiple characteristics and are connected in many different ways, leading to complex, multi-scalar interrelations. Governance involves the continuous identification of planning problems and search for solutions, resulting in temporary and shifting relationships between public and private actors, political agendas, and territorial interests. What constitutes valid knowledge in such context is not self-evident or even contested. Do these settings influence regional design? Can we identify aspects of regional design settings that are more decisive than others?

Regional design: What kind of performance?

Performance is defined as the impact that design has on decision-making. If indeed regional design is about planning change and creating institutional capacity, what does this entail? Does it relate to a shared framing of territories; the formation of actor networks; the bringing together of different types of knowledge; the operationalization of planning in trajectories of concrete spatial transformation; or is it all of the above? Can we develop criteria to assess the transformative power of regional design? Where, why, and when does the impact of regional design depart from the impact of (formal) planning?

Regional design: What kind of design?

Regional design takes place in an often highly complex spatial and institutional environment where issues and actors are strongly interconnected. As a consequence, regional design evolves in a context of multiple and interrelated choices. It is about preparing and making such choices: During design processes, planning solutions emerge. But how to select relevant sub-spaces, activities, themes, and projects? Are there specific methods that are more apt than others? How to apply such methods in complex multi-actor and multi-scalar settings? How to bring the different language domains – verbal, visual, emotional – of regional design together? How to organize regional design over time?

3 Results



3.1 Setting

Definition & Questions Regional setting designates the spatial and organisational framework of the region that serves as a starting point for the design endeavour. Regional setting may comprise a large array of different aspects in at least four different categories (Table 1).

Regional development	Actors & stakeholders	Organisational framework	Previous experience
- Regional boundaries / perimeter	- Person(s) / organisation(s) in charge	- Regional governance landscape	- Maturity in regional cooperation
- Monocentric / polycentric / centre / periphery / multi-scalarity / hierarchy	- Promoters and mentors of the region	- Regional organisations	- Design affinity
- Regional division of labor	- Public / private / science-related actors	- Statutory planning within the region	- Previous design processes
- Development pressure: growth / shrinkage / disparities / future trends	- Balance of power	- Resources & competencies at the regional scale	- Success / limitations of statutory planning
- Position in the international competition of locations	- Positions, interests, needs		- Impetus / trigger for regional design
- Level of suffering / urgency of problems			

Table 1:
Regional setting: Provisional framework to guide the discussion and workshops.

Input from Theory

Simin Davoudi, Professor of Environmental Policy & Planning at Newcastle University, reflected on the setting of regional design. She began by saying that there seems to be a **dominant perception** of what a region is that leads to a **reproduction of highly similar policies in many countries around the world**. However, regions are social constructs, and there are multiple interpretations of what a region is. By referring to spatial planning in the UK, the US, and Europe, she demonstrated that planning nevertheless often relies on one single interpretation. The analytical paradigm of the **FUR – functional urban region** – defines the region from an economic perspective. The concept is based on labor markets and the calculation of travel-to-work or daily commuting data. However, there are numerous limitations and shortcomings of such an analytical approach. Particularly problematic is the view that the **dominant city defines the region**, or even **substitutes the region**. Such conceptions of FURs lead to a particular highly biased **political agenda** as they frame spatial planning, steer investment decisions, and influence the development of place-identity prioritizing economic values and norms despite a lack of evidence. She concluded that perceptions of regions, such as the FUR, can turn into a ‘faith’ that pushes planning beyond critical reflection. Any advocating of a ‘region’ requires critical distance, she argued.

Debate

The subsequent discussion approved the need for a **richer definition** of what a region is. There was agreement that there is **no such thing as one single region**. From an analytical point of view, different issues such as transport, economy, landscape, culture, water, and waste incorporate **variable geometries, relations, and borders** at the regional scale.

The process of defining the region is in essence a **political process** – and **regional design** may serve as a **practice to critically reflect the region** as political and social construct. Participants suggested that regional design should analyse, map, and design **alternative functionalities, histories, and identities** of a region, and thus help to imagine a region beyond a pure economic logic.

Beyond differing functional, morphological, or historical logics and stories of a region, **the flows and the related means of transport** were nevertheless seen to be an important starting point for any regionalisation: It was argued that interaction and travel patterns define a region from the perspective of its inhabitants and users, and therefore what a region means for them. Beyond that, identifying **interdependencies within the region** and potentialities at the **inner borders** within the region instead of trying to delineate the region from the outside could be a valuable design approach.

The discussion showed that there is **no finality and precision in defining the region**. But how fuzzy can a region be? A simple answer to this question was suggested by one participant: the definition should fit its purpose! It was argued that the art of governing a region is **to activate and involve stakeholders in finding solutions to pressing problems**. Since problems change, perceptions change. **Flexibility and an open attitude** toward defining regions is required. Another comment was that regional institutions (and their ideas about regions) provide for continuity – the value of consensual and stable definitions of regions should not be underestimated.

Case Studies

The parallel workshops on the case studies in Amsterdam, the Ruhr, and Zürich raised a number of critical issues concerning the regional design setting.

Fragmentation and fuzzy set of boundaries everywhere! The experts from all three case studies stressed the administrative fragmentation of their region, and the multiple overlapping sets of boundaries and ‘regionalizations’. First seen as an anomaly and barrier, this condition turned out to be the ‘normal’ context within which regional design operates, i.e., a context of ambiguity. Institutional fragmentation and fuzzy spatial boundaries are a structural characteristic of the setting within which regional design evolves.

Cultures and traditions in cooperation and consensus finding. Within a fragmented governance landscape, and against a background of multiple perceptions of what a region is and constitutes, regional actors and organisations nonetheless showed a capacity for joint discussion and consensus finding. This capacity was associated with differing characteristics of the institutional context within which regional design initiatives evolve.

The policy culture in the Zürich case is strongly influenced by the general, Swiss tradition of direct democracy and a culture of finding consensus and agreement, including in intellectual discourse.

In the Ruhr case, the ‘Regionalverband Ruhr’ is the umbrella organization of a spatially highly complex region. In spite of a long tradition of political struggles between individual cities, there is now a regional association – established in 2009 – equipped with legislative and regional planning power – the result of structural change since the 1960s and continuing attempts to manage decline and conversions since then. For instance, through the International Exhibition (IBA: Internationale Bauausstellung) Emscher Park.

The Amsterdam Metropolitan Region is a relatively small region. With the informal co-operation among 32 municipalities, two provinces, and one city region, over the course of ten to fifteen years it has become a rather intimate club – a dense social network of actors who are all familiar with each other. They gathered in response to a felt institutional fragmentation in addressing problems in their area.

Looking at these three case studies, regional design takes different forms and organizational settings, and also effects and impacts vary greatly. However, they share cultures and traditions in inclusive collaboration and open decision-making.

Incentives for regional design: money and embedding in formal planning. Cultures and traditions in decision-making matter for regional co-operation but are not sufficient to stitch a region together. There is a need for additional incentives and benefits for regional cooperation and design, which together can be labelled as formal planning conditions.

In the Amsterdam case, the prospect of external money from central government unified actors and has become a major incentive for regional design initiatives exploring the future. The Dutch state maintains control over the largest part of tax revenues. The planning system requires effective regional governance arrangements to claim financial support by means of argumentation.

In the Ruhr region, the regional design competition 'Future of the Metropolis Ruhr' was the prelude to the revision of the formal regional plan. The ambitious regional design endeavour was also associated with the urgency of addressing economic structural change, and the need to take politically binding planning decisions which require sound argumentation.

In Switzerland, central government provides funding for its 'agglomeration programs', and the second tier level of the cantons has to provide matching funds. The Metrobild Zürich project was financed by the various cantons and municipalities which together form the 'Metropolitankonferenz Zürich' – the Zürich metropolitan association. The Metrobild initiative was meant to provide a common ground for developing a subsequent 'strategic spatial concept', which was eventually approved in November 2015.

Design traditions matter! In all cases, former experience with urban and regional design matters greatly. Such experience is an important resource for the regional design practices.

The regional design endeavour in the Ruhr region built upon experiences in the 'IBA Emscher Park'. This was the first international building exhibition in Germany with a deliberate and distinct regional focus, which took place over an entire decade, from 1990 to 2000. The aim of this exhibition – mainly financed by North Rhine-Westfalia – was to bundle public and private funding in strategic projects. This approach of steering structural economic and spatial change by means of small, locally motivated interventions came to be internationally known as 'perspective incrementalism': A 'cloud' of local interventions held together by a perspective on the region's future. In 2010, another lighthouse project was started: 'RUHR.2010 – European Capital of Culture'. This mega event was expected to contribute to a stronger identity for the region, and to foster culture and creative industries as an economic base. Both events prepared the way for regional design reflecting on a common future for the region.

In the Zürich case, different regional design approaches from inside and outside public administration were mentioned as references: the 2005 'Urban Design Portrait' of Switzerland by ETH Zürich Studio Basel; the 2011 study 'Glattal – an Emerging City!' by the architects group 'Krokodil'; and the 2012 'Spatial Concept of Switzerland', meant as an informal planning and policy guideline at the federal level. These initiatives were not seen to have a direct influence on the 'Metrobild Zürich' process. It was, however, argued that images and narratives from these projects stayed in the minds of actors, enhanced imagination, and also informed expectations concerning a new regional design initiative.

In the Netherlands design-led approaches in planning are frequently used – a tradition that can be traced back to the emergence of urban planning at the turn of the 20th century. No one at the conference mentioned a link to specific design projects such as in the cases discussed above: It seems that it is quite natural to design for the purpose of planning.

Setting the stage for regional design. There was agreement among experts that initiating a regional design endeavour within the fragmented landscape of governance is already an achievement in itself. Regional actors and institutions are generally quite hesitant to invest money and time in endeavours that have no predetermined result. For instance, in the Zürich case there was a remarkable consideration of the role that perceptions of regions play in setting up the stage for regional design. Here dominant perceptions and the focus on planning issues were identified from the outset and monitored via processes. Looking across the cases, there was agreement that regional design marks neither the beginning nor the end of a regional dialogue and cooperation process. Setting the stage for regional design seems to be half the battle in the sense of shaping mindsets about the present and future state of the region.

3.2 Performance

Definition & Questions

Regional design performance ranges from ‘hard’ to ‘soft’. Performance may be reflected in changing resources and responsibilities for regional planning and operational policy change. Performance may also be reflected in changing regional frames of reference and regional fields of action: changing discourses, institutionalized perceptions of regions and commonly perceived problems. Here the impact of regional design is clearly not an end result. Regional design performs during intermediary stages in cyclic decision-making processes. Regional design will at best initiate a next round of deliberation.

Regional resources	Regional frames of reference	Regional fields of action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regional discourses - Regional relations - Regional controversies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sense of belonging / shared responsibilities - Strategic view into the future - Orientation in everyday practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The next round - Regional arrangements - Regional conflicts

Table 2:
Regional impact: Provisional framework to guide the discussion and workshops.

Input from Theory

Terry van Dijk, Associate Professor in Planning and Vice Dean at University of Groningen, reflected on the performance of regional design. He presented an **impact model** that distinguishes **two interrelated cycles**: the action cycle and the communication cycle.

The **action cycle** links actors with their experienced space to the planning space of land use regulation and ownership. In this cycle, actors operate in relation to issues such as land acquisition, land development, and zoning: shaping physical space. Regional design cannot impact directly on reality, but it can inform the the future aspirations of actors.

The **communication cycle** links the **imagined space of designs** to the **experienced space of actors**. Designers give an interpretation of the needs and possibilities of actors. Their design proposals support place-making and the reframing of current practices by storytelling. As a result, every design story is an interpretation of existing frames, and aims at transforming them. Based on that model, Terry van Dijk argued that designers have the responsibility not to re-produce stories that individuals tell now but what society collectively needs tomorrow. Taking these two cycles together, planners and designers have to worry in particular about what he calls the **communicative tragedy**, a social choice dilemma between individual action today and collective action tomorrow.

Debate

This input raised a lively debate on the **role of the designer**. One provocative question was: Does the model presented presented by Förster and Balz and against the background of Van Dijk’s intervention imply that designers know better? Should designers have a mission to educate people? There was agreement that designers are required to take careful account of the particular spatial site they engage with – its past, present, and future development – and to carefully investigate the interests of the actors involved. **Listening** to actors was broadly acknowledged to be a **key regional designer’s skill**. All participants in the discussion contested the idea that designers uncover ‘real’ problems. **Planning was commonly seen as a political endeavour**, and planning **problems** and solutions are always

socially constructed. There was agreement that regional design should not only include a consideration of physical space but also **social, political, and cultural issues**. However, how such consideration should be used did not lead to a consensus. Is it the designer's task to determine solutions, or rather to present options? Should design be provocative or reflective? Should design from a 'radical' perspective be a wake up call to society? The stalemate in the discussion was broken up by a number of concluding remarks. One was based on the recognition that regional design is inevitably concerned about 'content', the built and unbuilt environment. The dividing lines between authors and audience, and between designers and actors should be carefully considered. Imagined space, experienced space, and physical space apply to all kinds of perspectives and roles. Regional design contributes to ordering and connecting these perceptions.

Case Studies

When it comes to the performance issue, the regional design processes in Amsterdam, the Ruhr and Zürich could not be assessed on their long-term impact yet. All discussed cases were relatively recent. However, the parallel workshops allowed comparison of expectations on the performance of regional design.

Regional design as catalyst to qualifying the region. In all three case studies the experts stressed that regional design is a way to initiate and facilitate joint discussion and to provide a 'designerly' context for discussions and negotiations between administrations, societal actors, and civil society at large. They emphasized that regional design practices are not meant to define and identify a 'product': a concrete planning solution. Design initiatives take place to improve deliberative processes. In fact, regional design proposals may disappear after having contributed to decision-making.

This does not mean that the actual content of regional design does not matter, on the contrary: insights into particular spatial environments, what constitutes these, how they develop, and how they might look in the future are crucial to initiating and steering discussion and dialogue. Insights into the qualities, strengths, and threats that spatial development holds and can hold in the future are a crucial factor in changing the minds of actors.

The performance of design imagery. The experts at the conference agreed that the performance of regional design can partially be attributed to the use of imagery: 'A picture is worth a thousand words'. Images allow for new readings and understanding of the region. Design imagery may be provocative but on the whole the performance of maps, models, and other spatial representations is not easy to predict. Is it possible nevertheless to 'plan' the impact and performance of imagery? Experts from the Zürich and Ruhr cases noted that competition settings foster the emergence of surprising and new imaginings and imageries. Some even favour a 'guerillia tactic' in the production and use of imagery. They argue that new and therefore influential representation always comes from outside public administration – from design initiatives at universities or in the context of private or civil initiatives, for instance.

A re-occurring issue in discussions on images is their narrative nature. The actual performance of imagery is closely connected with the story-lines they imply. New reasoning in and through imagery broadens the horizon in discussions. In this respect, images of regional structures can have a unifying force. An example is the ring of 19th century fortifications at a distance of about 25 kilometers from Amsterdam, which is regarded as part of the identity of the Amsterdam Metropolitan Region and imaged on local maps of Amsterdam as well as regional imagery. As already explained above, the regional design practices in the three case regions are rather novel, making the impact rather difficult to detect.

Regional design as an innovation process. All experts share a desire for planning innovation when becoming engaged with regional design. Regional planning dialogues and negotiations in general often become bogged down and not very productive. The stories, positions, and procedures are emphasized over and over again. In the Zürich case, regional design was particularly meant to challenge administration. It was part of a political process intended to open up new perspectives and ideas beyond the daily routine of policy-makers and administrators. Also in the Ruhr region there was a need for external input to overcome local government inertia and gridlock. The regional design competition Zukunft Metropole Ruhr was expected to introduce the perspectives of entrepreneurs and as such inspire co-operation among local governments. In the Amsterdam case, several design practices run in parallel. In conjunction, they are part of a continuous search for new planning solutions that is – according to the Dutch experts – deeply embedded in the overall Dutch planning system.

Formalizing regional design in planning. Regional design practices were in all cases positioned in broader planning processes within which they were to perform. In the Ruhr case, the regional design competition Zukunft Metropole Ruhr was a step in the creation of a formal regional plan. Regional design played a role in the debate preceding this plan, which included a ‘regional forum’ for decision-making, meetings among regional and sub-regional governments, and dialogues with experts. During the debate, the design exercise was supported by additional analysis and expert advice, resulting in a complex entangling of design proposals, expert knowledge, and opinions of participating stakeholders. To disentangle the impact of the individual contributions is therefore rather difficult. Experts argued nevertheless that the regional action programme, part of the current regional plan, was a concrete result of the design process.

In the Zürich case, the Metrobild Zürich process was carefully positioned at a distance from administration and formal planning. The process was meant to prepare the ground for the regional strategy that was supposed to fill the ‘regional gap’ between national and cantonal plans in Switzerland. Reflecting on the performance of the design practice in this strategy-making, experts made several observations. They noted that over the five years that had passed since the exercise, the impact on overall co-operation among local planning authorities in the Zürich region was negligible. That said, in November 2015, a joint Strategic Spatial Concept had been adopted by the Association of the metropolitan region of Zürich, which in part was influenced by the Metrobild Zürich. And although the design did not lead to the intended comprehensive single strategy for the region, the design process inspired the creation of sub-strategies: projects in which different coalitions of only few municipalities co-operated with each other. Another observation was that the Metrobild Zürich design was used in lobbying for investment into transport infrastructure by the Swiss federal government.

In the Amsterdam case, the impact of regional design on formal planning remains fuzzy. Regional design had some sort of influence on operational decisions, e.g., the formulation of a housing program that considers demands for housing across the region. However, in a context where many organisations propose ideas about desirable futures, it is difficult to filter out the effects design exercises on operational planning decisions.

The accountability of planning. Regional strategies often do not have a formal, statutory status as they are the outcome of deliberations and negotiations at a level of scale where there is no democratically elected council to stamp and approve their outcome. In such a context, regional design could contribute to the accountability of regional planning. The experts from the Ruhr region stressed the positive impact the regional design process had on the creation of mutual trust between

municipal planning administrations as the design processes were clearly collaborative. The actors involved got to know relevant colleagues in neighbouring cities. An understanding of how these colleagues perceive spatial development is an important condition for better cooperation. In the Amsterdam case, it was noted that design processes contributed to an understanding of roles of individual actors in regional co-operation. For instance, the role of the municipality of Amsterdam as a dominant actor in this region was brought to the fore and explicitly discussed. The openness of informal processes contribute to the accountability of actors in regional design and strategy making.

Identifying open questions and critical remarks. In all three cases it was emphasized that regional design initiatives were not started in the light of operational goals: a design waiting to be implemented. They were not meant to solve distinct problems within a region. Instead, regional design often leads to a novel or a more precise understanding of what regional issues and problems in essence are by focussing on a level of scale which is not matched by statutory government arrangements but clearly manifests itself in distinct issues. According to the experts at the conferences, this is probably the most important impact which regional design can have. Tracing the exact impact of design and detecting a causal relation between later events and the design process remains difficult and to some degree contentious.

3.3 Regional design

Definition & Questions

The conference did not start with a fixed idea of what regional design is and how it performs. Instead it proposed a distinction among aspects of regional design settings, a range of plausible performances, and characteristics of the regional design practices themselves. To discuss these characteristics of practices two main questions were posed: ‘What kind of design is made?’ and ‘What kind of design process is followed?’.

Spatial representations	Design issues	Spatial layout	Transformative perspective
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Choice of visual language - Overall picture of the region versus a bundle of alternative visualisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New forms of organisation & governance - Economic value-chains - Self-perception & identity - Regional lifelines: transport / infrastructure / water / energy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Degree of fuzziness / abstraction - The position of the region within the wider context - Zoom in & out - Morphology & function 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exploration and redefinition regional problems - Picture of a desirable future - Knowledge about paths / drivers / triggers for change
Paths to implementation	Time axis	Regional design toolbox	Involving regional actors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Setting up regulations, investments, priority projects - Activating & enabling regional actors - Triggering self-organisation and self-commitment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reflexive, step-by-step design process - Continuity / common theme - Room for the unpredicted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Analytical, visual, communicative skills - Freedom to think / design / discuss - Relation to statutory planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Design as a communicative practice - Processes of co-design - Author-audience relationships

Table 3:
Regional design strategy and process: Provisional framework to guide the discussion and workshops.

Input from Theory

Joachim Declerck, principal of Architecture Workroom Brussels and affiliated with the Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Versailles and Ghent University, elaborated upon the question ‘**How to shape regional futures?**’. Declerck observed a strong design culture in Belgium, focused, however, mainly on architecture. The distribution of land-uses across regions is informed by a generic regulatory framework. He argued that these two conditions result in a lack of practices that consider and promote spatial qualities of regions. In a **business as usual scenario**, space is a commodity, consumed and shaped by individuals according to regulations that disregard shared regional assets. He criticized designers: Through their **exclusive focus on architecture** (their pragmatic response to demands), they continuously endorse a system that strongly prioritizes individual preferences, but neglects common goods and values. Against this background, Declerck argued that regional **design has to explore and connect interests**, the demands at different levels of scale, and the capacities to fulfill these demands. He saw the **regional designer as a broker** who coordinates actions taken at different levels of planning and design, as exemplified by the Architecture Workroom Brussels, where he is engaged himself. He described this design practice as an independent and **free space**, a platform to engage stakeholders and formulate design alternatives, a practice that produces **cultural meaning**. He argued that it is the regional designer’s task to **design the cultural setting** of solutions rather than the solution itself.

Debate

In the subsequent discussion, it became evident that participants shared his view. They approved the idea that **regional design should include a broad range of values**. Practices should be concerned about agenda-setting and negotiation, about connecting people, about linking different spatial levels of scale, and about

testing and criticising projects. They should contribute to the organisation of planning by mediating among conflicting interests, by translating interests into a spatial vocabulary, and by encouraging collaboration. The audience was enchanted by the **entrepreneurial perspective on regional design** that Declerck suggested, and that views the designer as an actor who explores and integrates planning solutions as part of broader value chains. It was argued that he/she should develop business models, understand investment schemes, engage with the feasibility of projects, and initiate them on the grounds of proven demand and new synergies between uses and users. An entrepreneurial perspective on design was also associated with **urban ecology**: The designer is required to understand ‘flows’ of e.g., water and waste. An example that was given of such an approach was the BrabantStad design, accomplished by Declerck and others in 2016. Summarizing the entire discussion in a single sentence: The result of regional design is not a plan but an ‘entrepreneurial landscape’ within which new development evolves.

Case Studies

The discussion in the parallel workshops shed light on a number of ingredients of the regional design strategy and process.

Identifying (common) issues. Experts in all cases agreed that regional design – the products as well as the processes – is highly instrumental in the identification of planning issues. Spatial representations and discussions about these focus attention, often on intricate ‘soft’ spatial qualities, strengths, and future potentials. The selection and detailing of these issues and bringing them to the attention of local and regional actors was regarded as a crucial design activity in all three case areas. The Zürich experts stressed the importance of design in ‘framing’, constructing a basic agreement on relevant planning issues in the region, agreement on outline challenges, problems and tasks that regional planning should deal with. One Zürich expert noted that the design process was shaped by a search for “public goods” in the Zürich Metropolitan Area: Once they were ‘discovered’, they continued to play an important role throughout the entire regional design process.

Spatial building blocks of the region. In all cases, particularities of the region were an essential ingredient in design proposals. These particularities are often formed by numerous highly ‘typical’ smaller spatial entities within the region. Identifying similarities across local, municipal levels turned out to be an important step in the representation of regions, but also in identifying ‘fields of action’. In the regional design propositions for the Ruhr region, comparable neighborhoods within municipalities became more important than these administrative units themselves, for instance. A crucial design step in the Zürich case was the identification of differences among smaller entities or subregions as major constituent parts of regional diversity. Also in the Amsterdam case, the recognition that the region is highly diverse contributed strongly to a shared image of the region.

Setting up a simple design vocabulary. As was noted above, regional design processes are processes of identifying planning issues and bringing these to the minds of actors. In this sense, they were engaged with the naming of issues and in this way creating a vocabulary for regional planning. Often this lead to a divergence of views among design and planning experts in cases. Planning experts in the Zürich as well as the Ruhr case noted that the results of regional design competitions tend to be complex: Designers often suggest multiple layers, issues, subregions, actors, and time horizons. Planners noted that this complexity in content and form may appeal to experienced urban and regional designers, architects, and academics, but threatens and repels politicians and planners that are responsible for letting these complicated constructs fall ‘on the ground’. ‘Make it simple’ was an important demand for regional design in the realm of planning and politics. Design experts responded that simplicity can be extracted from complexity: an act of

translation. In the Zürich case, a basic rulebook relying on a simple distinction between stable and dynamic spaces within the region was based on rather in-depth analyses, for instance. Another comment on a design vocabulary concerned text and image: Crystal clear textual naming and labelling as well as mapping and drawing are equally important instruments in clarifying issues.

The full and rich image of the region. Planning experts in the three cases demanded simplicity in the sense of accessible content of design exercises. Through this, regional design may help to establish narratives of the region, and these can become important drivers for regional discourse. It was argued that the multiplicity of notions in design proposals functioned as a fertile breeding ground for storytelling in the Zürich and the Ruhr cases. Designers proposed what was generally regarded as a full and rich image of the region, a repertoire of notions that inspired planners.

Mapping as joint fact-finding, tools, and instruments. Mapping was an integral part of all three regional design cases. Mapping was seen as a process of joint fact-finding, supporting a search for evidence of what connects the various parts of a region, and what constitutes interdependences between issues and places. Mapping was also regarded as an important tool in portraying possible and desirable futures. Several tools and instruments in mapping were discussed. Design experts in the Zürich case argued that Geographic Information Systems (GIS) turned out to be a powerful tool in both the analysis of regional data and the creation of imagery of regional futures. As noted above, the development of a common visual language was an explicit aim of regional design processes. Graphic designers who are skilled in moving between the two- and three dimensional are particularly in demand on regional design teams.

The commitment of actors and their behavior in social networks. Discussions on design products and processes addressed the issue of how to connect design with planning processes. It was argued that from the outset designers should be sensitive towards the planning setting in which they work while at the same time claim a kind of free space in order to remain innovative. Potential commitment of local and regional actors should be carefully and continuously considered, specifically when regional design strategies aim at implementation. In the Amsterdam case, the importance of the embedding of design in formal planning was heavily emphasized. This means, for instance, that it is critical to take notice of existing plans. In general, designers should be skilled in working in an often contentious political context. They should also be aware of pragmatic or even opportunistic behavior that occurs in the context of complex social networks.

Regional design as dialogue and collaborative decision-making process. In all parallel workshops, it became evident that regional design is not a straightforward process, but often requires different steps and stages. In all cases, there was not one 'final' design product, but many in-between products that were presented, discussed, modified, and then presented again. Usually a broad range of different actors joined in, which turned regional design into a dialogue on planning. Such design processes resemble joint decision-making processes. The difference is that the decisions are not about concrete projects or interventions but about understanding and the content of the design 'story'. To synthesize and link the diverse and often conflicting requirements and expectations of a broad range of different actors and institutions in one design process was seen to be a critical design activity. It is about informing others and being informed in a multi-actor, collaborative setting.

Initiators, audiences and design commissions. Although in all three cases regional design evolved as a collaborative process, the concrete design practices differed in the organizations that initiated the design. Also, the design ‘audiences’ and the ‘openness’ of commissions differed to some degree. In the Ruhr and Zürich cases, designers had an open brief. Designers (and also the jury of the Zukunft Metropole Ruhr design entries) appreciated this freedom. The Metrobild Zürich process was carefully placed outside the daily routines of public administration. The temporary architects group ‘Krokodil’ designed a regional strategy without having an official mandate to do precisely this. They used the freedom given to turn towards a public audience and acquire public attention for their proposal, an effort that they called a ‘guerrilla strategy’. In contrast, the Amsterdam case design processes had, through their thorough embedding in planning, a much more pragmatic orientation. They followed the negotiation patterns in the domain of planning and policy-making. On an abstract level, one could say that all three design processes run parallel to political processes but that the connections are different, resulting in different degrees of freedom in relation to design content.

4 Outlook

Shaping regional futures was the main title of the conference organized by two universities of technology where regional design is part of both the educational curricula as well as the research programs. The conference focused on three regions where design is emerging amidst a complexity of governance arrangements. In fact, regional design is a response towards this complexity: In the absence of statutory arrangements, non-standardized processes are needed to bring regional stakeholders together to think and act on the future of their region.

The conference sought to compare experience in spite of the fact that the three cases are situated in three different countries with different government and governance arrangements, and different planning and design cultures. As is made clear on the foregoing pages there are many different angles from which to look at regional design. If one overall conclusion could be drawn, it is about the added value of regional design: It is – or at least, could be – a valuable tool to complement statutory planning. Regional design has an analytical value because it seeks to understand and unveil – using spatial imagery as a research as well as a communicative tool – the qualities of regional spatial structures. Because these qualities do not represent themselves, but are in fact based on value judgement, regional design also touches upon normative and therefore political thinking. On the condition that regional design is not carried out from ivory towers of technocratic wisdom, such design can bring actors together, and make them more sensitive to thinking and acting across spatial scales and sectoral boundaries.

This publication is at the same time a presentation of the proceedings of a conference as well as a position paper with messages related to four critical issues:

- **Scale detection:** Regional design is needed to detect the appropriate scales on which policy issues are situated and how to address these.
- **Using time:** Regional design allows actors to ‘make time their friend’; it is about problem finding instead of jumping ahead to problem solving too early or too hastily (‘solutions without a problem’).
- **Strategic selectivity:** Regional design is instrumental in making choices by synthesising spatially anchored potentialities.
- **Impact orientation:** Regional design is about detecting the intended and non-intended effects of possible course of action.

The conference *Shaping Regional Futures: Mapping, Designing, Transforming!* was part of a broader effort to establish a platform for the exchange of knowledge and critical reflection on regional design. The conference – again – showed how important it is to bring academic and professional practitioners together. We even dare to say that this is the Munich and Delft way of doing research and educating students in the field of planning and design.

The conference tried to build upon **earlier events**. Especially worth mentioning are:

- A round Table at the 2014 AESOP conference: Emerging regional design in an era of co-governance and co-evolution, Thursday 10th July, 15.30-17.00, Utrecht, The Netherlands.

- Mapping the City - A Seminar on Changing Rationalities/Approaches in Comparative City Analysis and Mapping, 29 October 2014, at the Amsterdam Institute for Advanced Metropolitan Solutions (AMS) – Royal Institute of the Tropes (KIT).

We would like to continue our explorations. An **upcoming event** is:

- Regional design and governance re-scaling: comparing European practices. Spring 2017, Florence. Conference host: University of Florence (UNIFI), supported by Delft University of Technology (TU Delft). Organizers: Valeria Lingua & Carlo Pisano, Chair of Urban and Regional Planning, University of Florence (<http://www.dida.unifi.it>) and Wil Zonneveld & Verena Balz, Chair of Spatial Planning & Strategy, TU Delft (<http://www.spatialplanning.bk.tudelft.nl>).

We have not taken any decision yet about other events bringing academic and professional practitioners together. The reader is invited to follow our website and blogs¹, which will also announce the publications we seek to prepare.

Agnes Förster
Verena Balz
Alain Thierstein
Wil Zonneveld

Munich & Delft, 10/10/2016

¹ www.re.ar.tum.de, <http://spatialplanningtudelft.eu>, www.studio-stadt-region.de

5 Appendix

List of Participants

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Müller	Christiane	TU München
Müntener	Garry	TU München
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Nollert	Markus	ETH Zurich
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von Abercron	Konstantin	Ehret + Klein, Starnberg
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Zhao	Juanjuan	TU München
Zhu	Tianyu	TU München
Zonneveld	Wil	TU Delft

Shaping regional futures Mapping, designing, transforming!

Oskar von Miller Forum, Munich
14th-15th October 2015

Programme

Day 1 – 14th October

Session 1: Regional design - Perspectives from theory

- 13:00 - 13:30 **Gathering and small lunch**
- 13:30 - 14:30 **Welcome & introduction**
Alain Thierstein, Agnes Förster, TUM
Wil Zonneveld, Verena Balz, TUD
- 14:30 - 15:30 **Regional design: What kind of setting?**
Simin Davoudi, Newcastle University
- 15:30 - 16:00 Coffee break
- 16:00 - 17:00 **Regional design: What kind of performance?**
Terry van Dijk, University of Groningen
- 17:00 - 18:00 **Regional design: What kind of design?**
Joachim Declerck, Ghent University
- 19:00 - 22:00 Conference dinner

Day 2 – 15th October

Session 2: Academic approaches to teaching regional design

- 9:00 - 9:15 **Welcome and brief synopsis of the first conference day**
- 9:15 - 10:30 **Teaching regional design: Experience from Munich and Delft**
Nadia Alaily-Mattar, Lukas Gilliard, TUM
Remon Rooij, TUD
- 10:30 - 11:00 Coffee break
- 11:00 - 12:30 **Key teaching challenges to regional design as an academic exercise**
Discussion
- 12:30 - 13:30 Lunch

Session 3: European case-studies in regional design

- 13:30 - 14:00 **Introduction to the case-studies**
- 14:00 - 17:30 **Parallel workshops on three European case-studies**
- Workshop A: Metropoolregio Amsterdam**
San Verschuuren, Municipality of Amsterdam
Paul Gerretsen, Association Delta Metropolis
Jannemarie de Jonge, Wing, Wageningen
- Workshop B: Metrobild Zürich**
Wilhelm Natrup, Canton of Zurich
Anna Schindler, City of Zurich
Martin Berchtold, berchtoldkrass space & options, Karlsruhe
- Workshop C: Ideenwettbewerb Zukunft Metropole Ruhr**
Christa Reicher, Dortmund University of Technology
Martin Tönnies, Ruhr Regional Association
- 17:30 - 18:30 **Plenary discussion**
- 18:30 - 19:30 Snacks

The spatial future of the Munich Metropolitan Region – lessons learnt from Europe

- 19:30 - 21:00 **Public panel discussion** (in German, free entry)
Paul Gerretsen, Association Delta Metropolis
Max Gotz, Lord Mayor of Erding
Elisabeth Merk, City of Munich
Frank Neuman, Munich Airport
Anna Schindler, City of Zurich
Martin Tönnies, Ruhr Regional Association

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ISW München
TUM Graduate Center Architecture

Contribution to expenses:

Session 1: 40 EUR
Session 2: 35 EUR
Lunch: 30 EUR
Session 3: 80 EUR
Public panel discussion:
free entry

Notes of the conference

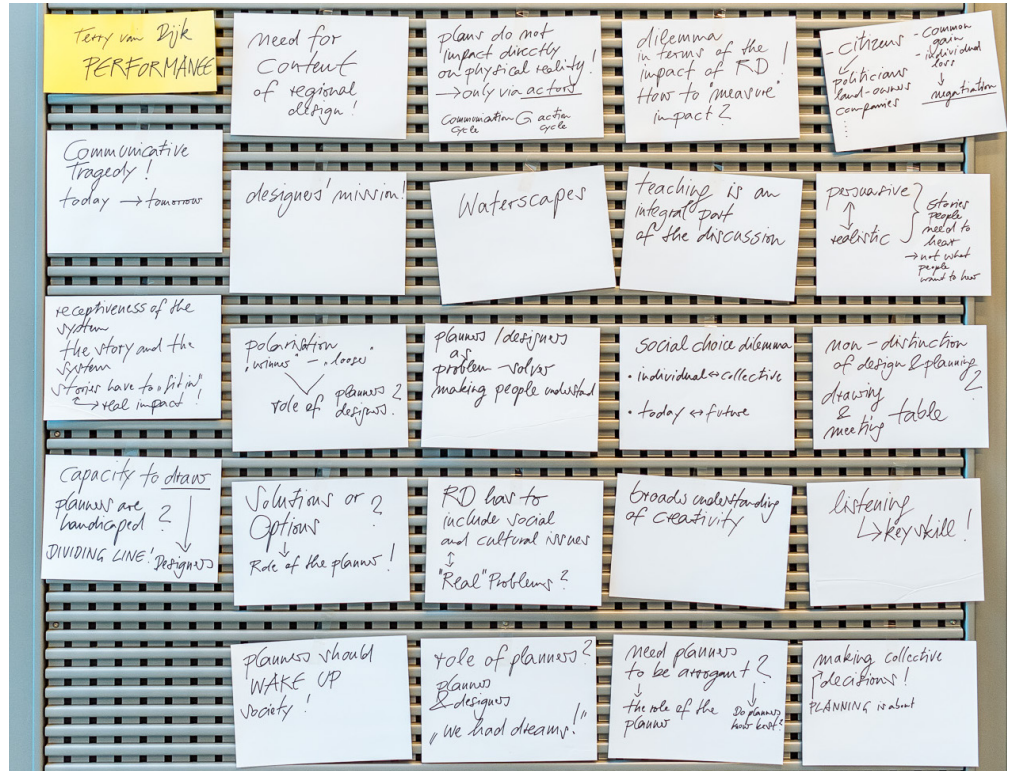


Figure 2: Notes on the discussion with Terry van Dijk.

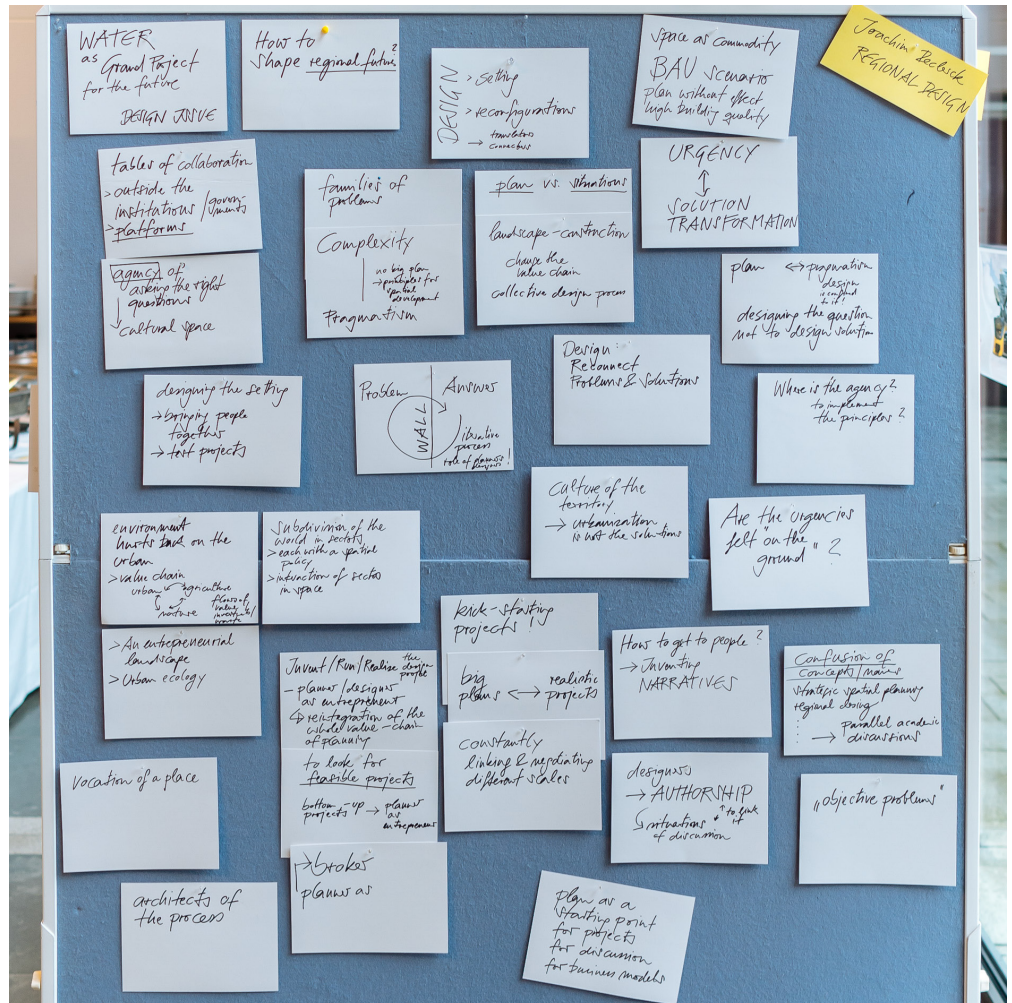


Figure 3: Notes on the discussion with Joachim Declerck.

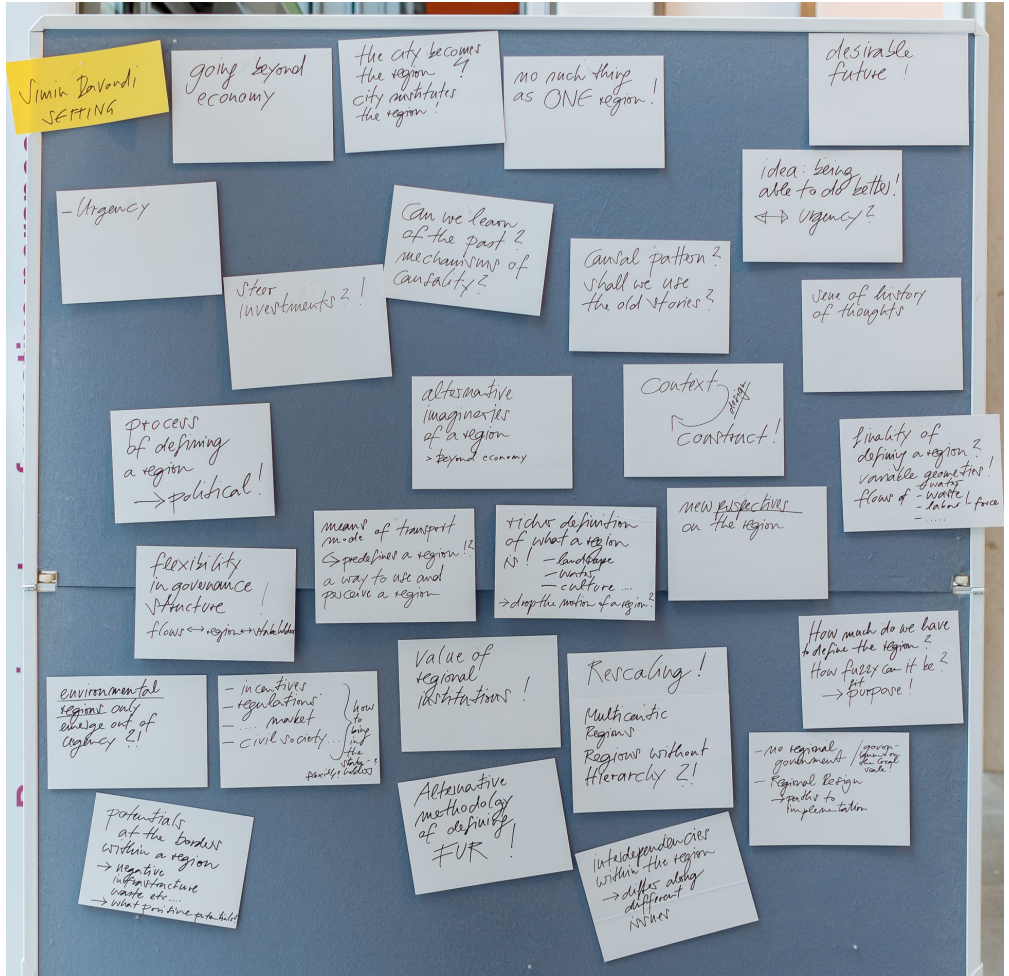


Figure 4: Notes on the discussion with Simin Davoudi.

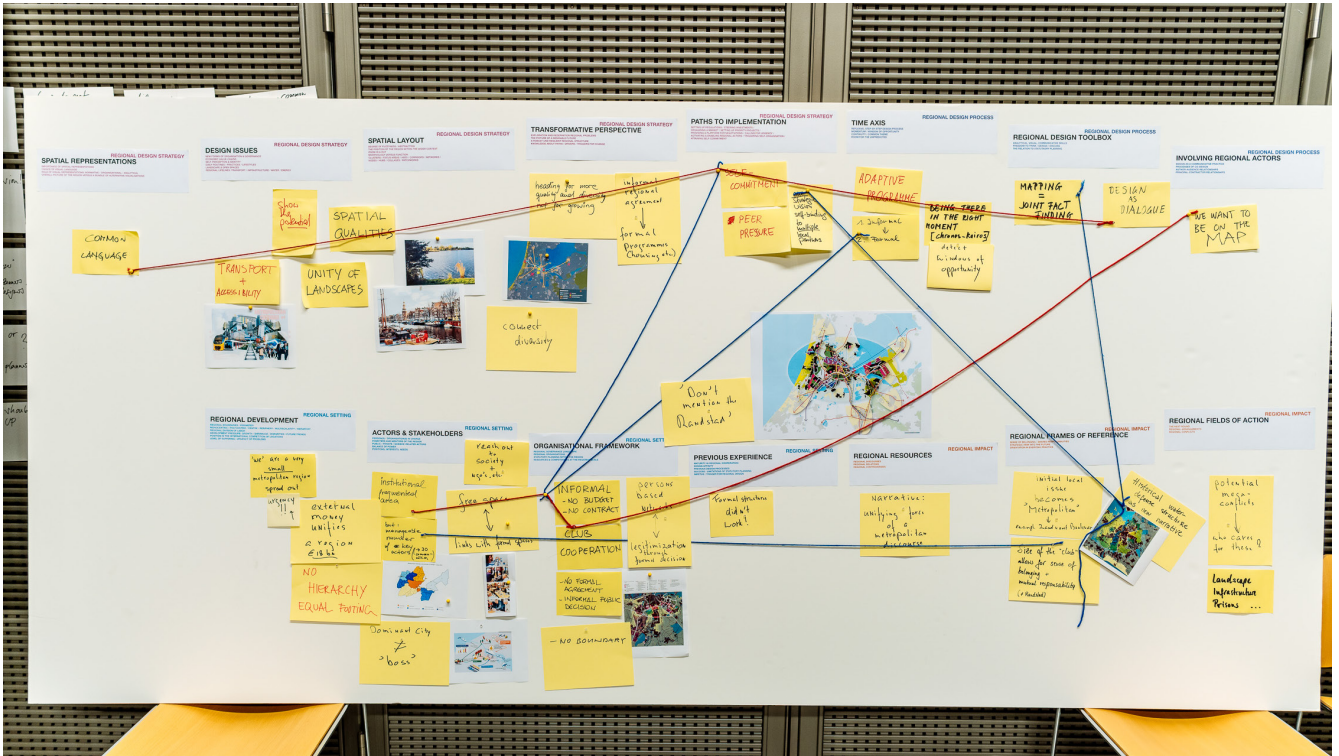


Figure 5: Notes on the discussion of the Amsterdam case.



Figure 6: Notes on the discussion of the Zürich case.

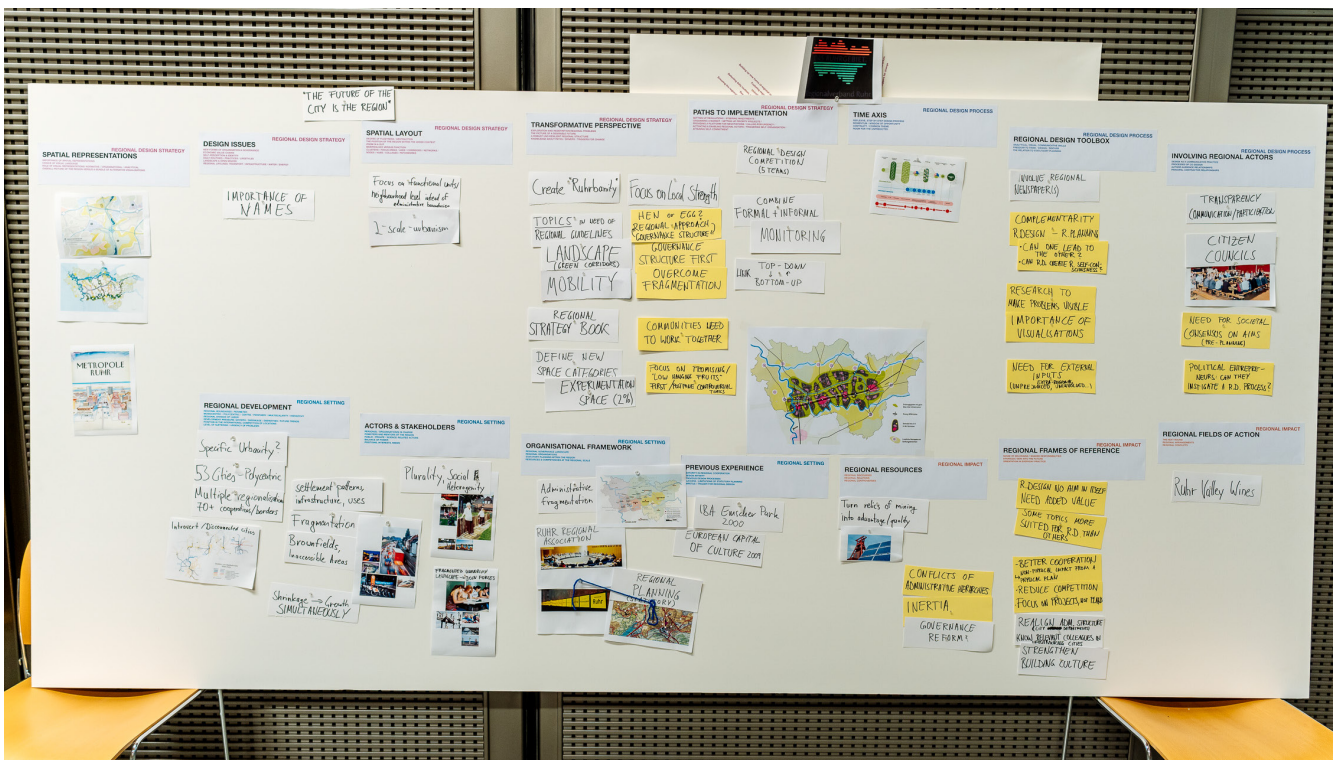


Figure 7: Notes on the discussion of the Ruhr case.

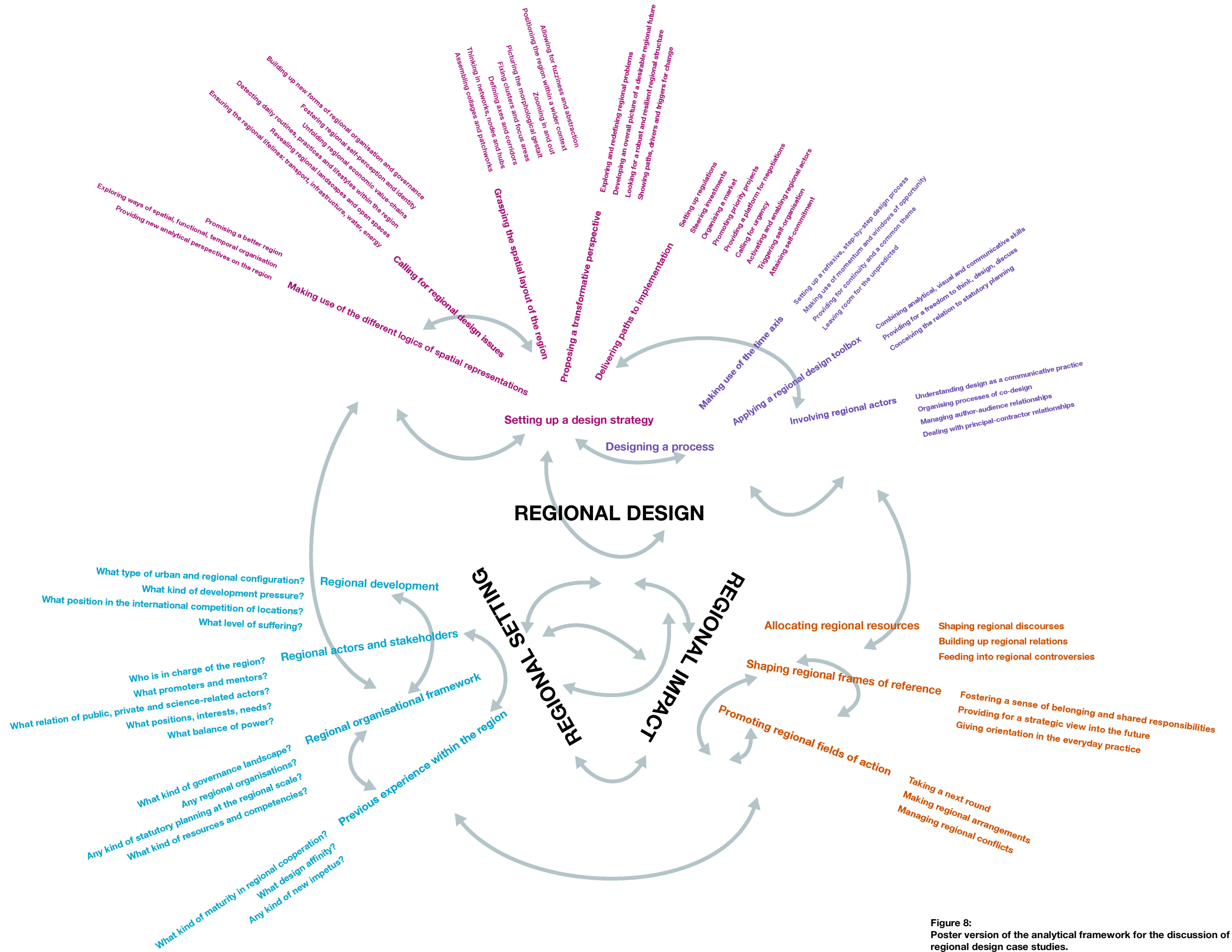


Figure 8: Poster version of the analytical framework for the discussion of the regional design case studies.