Pathways of stakeholders' relations and frames in collaborative planning practices: A framework to analyse relating and framing dynamics

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ABSTRACT

It is widely acknowledged that stakeholders' relations are critical in collaborative planning. Hence, literature in this field has elaborated on the communicative and relational conditions that facilitate collaborative planning processes. Less attention has been paid to the dynamics of stakeholders' relations and to how these influence planning processes. Analytical tools to systematically study stakeholders' relating dynamics in collaborative planning processes are underdeveloped. Drawing on Baxter and Montgomery's relational dialectics approach, we introduce an analytical framework to study stakeholders' relating dynamics in collaborative planning and the way these interact with framing dynamics. We exemplify the core concepts of our framework with illustrations based on running case study research.

INTRODUCTION

Collaborative approaches to planning – here conceived as a future-oriented activity directed towards the imagination of the future city or area (see Forester, 1999; Hillier and Gunder, 2005) – are increasingly popular, in planning theory and planning practice (Booher, 2004; Harris, 2002; Healey, 1997; Innes and Booher, 1999).[1] Central in such approaches is the recognition that planning activities affect a diversity of stakeholders, each having different and often competing claims on the planning issue at stake. Collaborative approaches emphasise the importance of developing consensus among these different views, and creating common visions of the future through dialogue (Boelens, 2010; Edelenbos, 2005; Fainstein, 2000; Healey, 2003). Partnership, stakeholder involvement, collaboration and consensus-oriented decision-making are core principles in collaborative planning theory and practice (Healey, 1998; Innes and Booher, 1999; Walker and Hurley, 2004). Planning is approached as an interactive and relational endeavour, involving 'social processes through which ways of thinkings, ways of valuing and ways of acting are actively constructed by participants' (Healey, 1997: 29).

It is not surprising then, that both planning theorists and practitioners point to the pivotal role of stakeholders' relations in collaborative planning systems (Booher, 2004; Forester, 1999). These relations are said to be 'the medium for collaborative work' (Foster-Fishman et al., 2001: 251): it is through these relationships that consensus and mutual learning can occur. Hence, scholars repeatedly emphasise the essential role of relationship building in collaborative endeavours (Boelens, 2010; Booher, 2004; Forester, 1999; Healey, 1997; Innes and Booher, 2003, 2004, 2015).

Drawing on Habermas' communicative rationality, collaborative planning theorists explicate preferred forms of planning and desirable communicative or relational conditions, or settings, for successful collaborative planning.[2] Healey (1997, 1998) accentuates reflexive

1 There are different conceptions of 'what planning is' (see Adams, 1994). Some authors approach planning as a policy-driven governance activity (Healey, 1997) or, even narrower, as the spatial policies and practices which shape the urban environment under the auspices of the modern state (see Lefebvre in Yiftachel and Huxley, 2000). Still others have a broader conception of planning and see planning as including more than policy or state-related activities. Planning in this view comprises of all kind of activities concerned with the imagination of the future city (Forester, 1999; Throgmorton, 2003). Although we associate planning with the latter, reality is – at least in the Netherlands – that most planning is a governmental preoccupation (see Van Eeten and Roe, 2000). This also applies to the running cases we will present later on in this article.

2 Collaborative approaches to planning draw on Habermas' ideas on communicative rationality and communicative action. Communicative rationality forms the normative background for critically questioning and evaluating the qualities of interactive practices (Healey, 2003). For discussion of Habermas' core ideas on communicative rationality/action in the context of planning, see, for instance, Forester (1999), Healey (1997), Innes and Booher (2003).

dialogue as the basis for collaborative planning and emphasises the importance of building relational resources such as trust, social capital and mutual understanding. Innes and Booher (2000, 2003) formulate similar ideas and point to the importance of establishing empathic understanding, reciprocal relations (as 'the glue for their continuing work'; Innes and Booher, 2000: 10) and trust. This illustrates the focus on process aspects of and conditions for planning typical of collaborative planning literature. However, the theoretical and empirical focus of collaborative planning scholars on conditions, on preferred settings and on normative principles for successful collaborative planning, shifts attention away from the ever-changing character of stakeholders' relations and the ways these relating dynamics interact with the planning process.[3] Yet, relationships are continuously changing and, in accordance with Harvey (1996), it is this changing process that needs to be understood and explained. Although collaborative planning scholars do attend to relating dynamics in collaborative planning (e.g. Forester, 1999; Healey, 1997; Healey et al., 2003), few have systematically studied – on the basis of a theoretically underpinned analytical framework – the role and impact of relating dynamics in collaborative planning processes.[4]

This article presents an analytical framework that intends to capture stakeholders' relating dynamics, that is, relational change processes – and its interplay with framing dynamics inherent to collaborative planning practices. The framework takes a dynamic perspective on stakeholders' relations – based upon the relational dialectics approach towards relating (see Baxter and Montgomery, 1996; see also Baxter, 2004a, 2011). Rather than focusing on how relations should be, and which conditions are desirable, the framework places focus on how relations evolve and change over time, and on how these changing relational settings affect framing processes in collaborative planning. As such, it recognises the evolutionary character of collaboration (Gray, 1989). The framework offers conceptual tools for systematic and detailed analyses of relational pathways in collaborative planning practices and its interplay with framing. The development of such a framework responds to Yiftachel and Huxley's (2000) call to turn attention away from how things should be, and instead explain how things are, and ask questions about the genealogy of planning practice. To make the framework more vivid, we exemplify the core concepts of our framework

3 Empirical studies from a collaborative planning perspective tend to focus on interpreting and evaluating the characteristics of planning processes against a set of process and outcome criteria rooted in Habermas' communicative rationality. Habermas' ideal speech situation is used as an abstract benchmark or reference point to analyse empirical practices against.

4 One exception is Healey et al.'s (2003) framework that focuses on the development of institutional capacities. However, Healey et al. (2003) focus specifically on 'the scale and nature of change in local institutional capacity produced by a particular innovation, and the extent to which it has promoted more attention to place quality, in a more open-minded and inclusive mode of governance' (p. 64). In that sense, their focus was more on how transformations in governance, and more specifically a shift towards a more inclusive mode of governance, had its effects on the development of institutional capacity rather than on how institutional capacity develops and evolves throughout time, as a dynamic feature of collaborative planning.

with illustrations based on running case study research on two collaboratively approached urban planning projects in the city of Rotterdam, the Netherlands. Hence, our examples are drawn from current research on two cases in which we use the presented analytical framework as the basis for our data collection and analysis.[5]

The structure of the article is as follows. We begin with exploring some core ideas of collaborative planning regarding the role of stakeholders' relations in collaborative planning processes and their interaction with framing processes. In the subsequent section, we discuss our theoretical approach to relating, more specifically the relational dialectics approach as developed by Baxter and Montgomery (1996) (see also Baxter, 2004a, 2011) which places strong emphasis on the dynamic, changing nature of relations. The third section introduces a framework to analyse relating dynamics, framing dynamics and their interaction in collaborative processes. The framework offers key concepts that guide the researcher towards an empirical understanding of the aforementioned phenomena. Throughout our conceptual discussion, we exemplify the core concepts with illustrations based on running case study research. We close the article with a reflection on the value of the developed framework for both planning theory and practice.

RELATING AND FRAMING IN COLLABORATIVE PLANNING

Collaborative planning as a relational endeavour

At the core of collaborative planning is the idea that collaborative planning processes should be set up as an 'authentic' (Innes and Booher, 2003, 2004) or 'reflexive' dialogue (Healey, 1997). Authentic dialogue or reflexive dialogue, approximating Habermas' ideal speech situation, ultimately creates social capital and relational values such as reciprocity,

5 Currently, we are collecting and analysing data from two urban planning cases, in the context of the PhD research of the first author. The first case under study, case Katendrecht, focuses on the collaborative process concerning the comprehensive redevelopment and transformation of the old deteriorated harbour zone Katendrecht, into an attractive residential area. This collaborative process started around the new millennium. The second case, case Vreewijk, focuses on the intensive collaboration between stakeholders concerning the physical improvement of the housing stock and public space in the residential area and so-called 'garden village' of Vreewijk. This collaborative process started around 2008. Both areas are located in the city of Rotterdam. Data collection and analysis in these cases is based upon the core concepts of our framework. In both cases, we collect material through in-depth narrative interviews with more than 20 stakeholders, both stakeholders that are currently involved and stakeholders that have been involved in the past. We complement our interview material with field notes from participant observation and key documents related to the case, such as policy or vision documents. We intend to publish on the findings of these case studies in the near future.

stronger personal relationships and trust (Healey et al., 2003; Innes and Booher, 2004).[6] These relational qualities are deemed precursors to arrive at successful collaborative planning outcomes (Mandarano, 2009; Rydin and Pennington, 2000). In other words, the quality of relations is an important asset in collaborative planning (Healey et al., 2003; Wagenaar and Specht, 2010). Hence, to be successful in collaborative work, stakeholders should invest in their mutual relations, 'build' (new) and 'develop' (existing) relationships (cf. Foster-Fishman et al., 2001; Innes and Booher, 2004) and 'strengthen ties' (Holman, 2008). Collaborative planning scholars thus emphasise that the quality of working relations within a collaborative planning system makes a difference (Healey, 1996). Hillier (2000) argues, 'the process of planning reflects the quality of such relationships' (p. 34). Planning thus depends on the inter-relational capacity or quality of the social arena of a specific planning system (Healey, 1998; Hillier, 2000).

The above discussed ideas about the 'ideal' planning process, highlighting consensus, have, however, been subject to criticism. Most notably, scholars argue that the normative rhetoric of collaborative planning theory does not reflect the reality of planning practice (Abu-Orf, 2005; Boelens, 2010; Harris, 2002; Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger, 1998). In practice, the premises of collaborative planning theory are unachievable and 'real' collaborative planning efforts encounter obstacles and difficulties (Abram, 2000; Fainstein, 2000; Hillier, 2003; Margerum, 2002). Critics argue that collaborative planning theory is too optimistic or even 'utopian', rather than realistic, and thus disregards the mores of reality (see Gunder, 2003; Hillier, 2003; Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger, 1998). For one thing, its focus on conditions and normative principles as abstract reference points to evaluate empirical practices, somewhat shifts attention away from the empirical dynamic, evolving nature of stakeholders' relations. Yet, relationships are processes, lived histories, continuously changing: they constantly evolve as a function of the continuing interactions between relational parties, in this case the stakeholders involved in the collaborative planning system (Crossley, 2010). By focusing on conditions, on a desirable state for collaborative planning, collaborative planning scholars thus somewhat mask the ever-changing reality of relating or the 'doing' of a relationship which 'by means of interaction, is interwoven with and affected by […] contingencies and, as such, can be quite unpredictable' (Crossley, 2010: 9). Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger (1998) touch upon this issue in their discussion of communicative rationality:

> The debating arena might well produce new relations and forms of practice that all stakeholders concur with; this would be successful for that particular day, but there is

6 Putnam (2000) defines social capital as the 'connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them' (p. 19).

> no guarantee that successive meetings would witness the same degree of mutual mind-changing. Similarly, a 'successful' practice might exist only for one particular issue within a discourse arena – individuals come together as a temporary aberration but drift apart again into retrenched positions for the remainder of the exercise. (p. 1982)

This illustrates how the social arena in collaborative planning systems changes over time or even per issue. Crossley (2010) makes a similar point:

> even within a 'stable relationship' interactions are highly variable, moved as they are in different instances by different purposes, events and both the 'domains' of practice [Mische and White 1998; White 2008] and the spaces (real and virtual) in which they take place. (p. 9)

Both quotes point to the dynamic and evolving nature of relations, and stress the importance of (systematically) studying this empirically on the basis of a sound conceptual framework.

Relating–framing interplay in collaborative planning

Collaborative planning brings together different actors, each having their own perspectives, specific experiences and positions, which makes them look at issues from different points of view (Bouwen, 2001; Bouwen and Taillieu, 2004; Dewulf et al., 2004; Gray, 2004; Healey, 1997, 2003). Central in collaborative planning is the aim to align these different views or 'frames' and to formulate a 'common perception' or common frame to the issue at stake, such as the design of an urban plan or policy (De Roo and Porter, 2007; Dewulf et al., 2005; Putnam and Holmer, 1992). Collaborative planning thus demands tuning different frames of various stakeholders.

Different scholars argue how relating dynamics influence framing processes, that is, how issues are framed, how frames evolve and become aligned or not (see Bouwen, 2001; Bouwen and Taillieu, 2004). In other words, relating dynamics in collaborative systems are linked to framing processes – the 'struggles of frames' – taking place in collaborative planning processes (Hajer, 2003; Healey et al., 2003). Following these ideas on the interplay between relating and framing, scholars accentuate how both practitioners and researchers should take both dimensions into account when dealing with or studying planning practices. Healey (2003), for instance, mentions that 'the challenge for researchers and practitioners is to keep the interplay between both dimensions in mind as instances of practice unfold' (p. 111).

In sum, relating and framing dynamics are not separate spheres, but are intertwined. The main thrust is that relating dynamics will influence and shape the framing dynamics in collaborative planning practices and vice versa.

Analysing relating and framing dynamics

Collaborative planning literature widely acknowledges the importance of stakeholders' relations in collaborative planning practices and their interplay with framing processes. Moreover, some scholars pay attention to the dynamic nature of these relations (e.g. Forester, 1999; Healey et al., 2003). However, the relational change process itself and the mechanisms underlying it have received less attention in collaborative planning literature. Until now, theoretical grip and analytical tools for systematic analyses of relating and framing pathways are underdeveloped. Yet, relations are characterized by complex dynamics, and this is something both planners and other stakeholders need to deal with. Therefore, we posit that there is merit in exploring and explaining relating dynamics and its effects upon framing processes.

In the remainder of this article, we present an analytical framework to empirically explore and explain relating dynamics, that is, relational pathways, and their interplay with framing dynamics inherent to collaborative planning practices. The framework draws on ideas of communication theory, more specifically on the relational dialectics approach (Baxter and Montgomery, 1996; see also Baxter, 2004a, 2011) which we introduce in the following section – and on framing literature.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE ON RELATING: RELATIONAL DIALECTICS

Relational dialectics has been developed and applied within communication theory and social psychology (Baxter and Montgomery, 1996; Baxter 2004a, 2011). Relational dialectics' main argument is that relations are continuously in flux, acknowledging change as a central aspect of relating – as will become obvious further on in this paragraph. It builds on ideas of the early-twentieth century Russian philosopher Bakhtin who viewed social life as a fragmented, disorderly and messy interweave of opposing discourses. Bakhtin (1981) introduced a theory of 'dialogism', which he developed as 'a critique of theories and practices that reduced the unfinalizable, open and varied nature of social life in determinate, closed, totalizing ways' (Baxter, 2004a: 181). In Bakhtin's view two opposing forces characterize all social interactions: centripetal (unifying) and centrifugal (diversifying) forces. Elaborating on these ideas, relational dialectics 'represents an approach where the basic "messiness"

of social life is not ignored or downplayed but instead embraced as a critical process in how individuals make sense of everyday experience' (Erbert et al., 2005: 24). The theory 'presupposes that the business of relating is as much about differences as similarities' (Baxter, 2004b: 5). Baxter (2011: 6–7) presents relational dialectics theory as a sensitizing, analytical scheme or heuristic device to render relating dynamics more intelligible.

Following Bakthin's theory of dialogism, relational dialectics builds on the ontological idea of relations as social constructions jointly constituted by actors in interaction (Baxter, 2004a; see also Hosking, 2006). Relations are seen as 'dialogic': as naturally revolving around the dynamic interplay between contradictory, competing values or 'dialectical tensions' (Baxter and Montgomery, 1996; see also Baxter, 2004a, 2011; Seo and Creed, 2002). Relations are continuously hovering between these 'opposing', yet inter-related values, in a tug of war kind of way (Cools, 2006). These dialectical tensions and how relational partners deal with them are the central dynamics that underlie relational meaning-making and change over time (Baxter, 2011; Cools, 2011; Johnson and Long, 2002).

According to relational dialectics theory, a classic example of a dialectical tension typical for interpersonal relationships is that between autonomy and connectedness (Baxter, 2004a; Baxter and Simon, 1993). This tension refers to the simultaneously present need for independence and dependence in interpersonal relationships. Too much autonomy is simply destructive for the joint development of a relational identity and connection with the other. On the other hand, without a notion of autonomy, individuals have no identity and so cannot exist in a relation. Both values in this dialectical tension are inextricably related through 'inseparable connection' (Conforth, 1971: 69) that suggests each value gains its significance from the other in an inherent, on-going interplay or 'dialogue' (Johnson and Long, 2002). This implies that relational partners continuously need to accommodate both 'being together' (connectedness) and 'being apart' (autonomy) in their relation. This struggle of dialectical tensions is inherent to relating: they cannot be eliminated; they can only be adapted to, managed or transformed.

Relational dialectic theorists argue that this continuous interplay between dialectical tensions and the way relational partners give meaning to them and cope with them is what constitutes relating. Relations evolve because partners constantly define and redefine the tensions inherent to their interactions and relating. For example, in some periods, relational partners appreciate to be more connected, more in tune, but, in other periods, they may appreciate it more to have some more personal space. Such struggles, relational dialectics argues, lay at the basis of the on-going fluidity and variability of relationships (Cools, 2011).

This dialectical character of relating also seems to be present in stakeholders' relations in collaborative planning processes. Different authors implicitly touch upon the presence of such dialectical tensions – or opposing values – in planning processes. Hillier (2003), for instance, argues for 'incorporating both collaboration and competition, both striving to understand and engage with consensus-formation while at the same time respecting differences of values and areas of disagreements' in planning decision-making (p. 54). Wagenaar (2007) refers to another tension, 'for participatory arrangements to function at all, they need to hover between order and chaos' (p. 43). Each of these remarks implies that competing values, that is, dialectical tensions, also characterize collaborative planning practices.

It is important to note here that these dialectical tensions should not be understood as necessarily conflictual or problematic. Neither one of both values, of, for example, the autonomy-connectedness tension, is seen as more desirable than the other. Emphasis on one of both poles, at the expense of the other, can potentially have both positive and negative implications for the mutual relationships (Montgomery, 1993). This contrasts with the prevailing teleological idea that relations should ideally evolve to more connectedness – which Baxter and Montgomery (1996) refer to as 'unidirectional moreness' – whereby lack of 'more' is seen as relational regression (Cools, 2011). Rather relational dialectics sees relating as an indeterminate process, 'with no clear end-states and no necessary paths of change' (Cools, 2011). These ideas of relating challenge the idea of a preferred endstate, as formulated in some collaborative planning literature. Such a teleological view of relating disregards the ever-changing, dynamic nature of relations, whereas relational dialectics emphasises change as the natural state of relations. From a relational dialectics perspective, it makes less sense to focus all too much on a preferred end-state since this will only be a momentary equilibrium, or 'a momentary transition in a stream of continuous change' (Cools, 2011). Furthermore, such a teleological view also overlooks the value and meaning of different relational states or 'momentary transitions' in their own right. Hence, relational dialectics argue that focus should be on the movement of a relation over time and what that movement or flow means for the given relation.

When relations are conceived as 'dialogic', revolving around the dynamic interplay of competing values, it is accepted that change is ever-present and relations are continuously in 'flux' (Baxter, 2004a; Cools, 2011; Graham, 1997; Johnson et al., 2003). Stability is nothing more than a 'between' or a momentary transition in a continuously changing process (Baxter, 2004a; Cools, 2006). Relational change implies re-interpretation of interplaying values, a 'movement' – for instance, towards more autonomy – that redefines the relation and brings about new relational experiences and meanings.

The dynamic interplay between values is continuously created and re-created through the on-going interactive behaviour of relational parties. Baxter and Montgomery (1996) refer to these behaviours as praxis: the communicative choices (varying in intention and mindfulness) actors make on how to deal with the competing values inherent to their relation (Cools, 2011; Johnson and Long, 2002).

Dialectical theory further emphasises that relations cannot be understood in isolation, but must be viewed in their context or 'chronotope' (Bakhtin, 1981: 84). This refers to a relation's location in time and space and highlights the importance of taking temporal, spatial, and socio-historical contextual factors into consideration to fully understand the dialectical experience (Cools, 2011). The 'chronotope' of interaction is crucial in how actors interpret and respond to dialectical exigencies (Johnson and Long, 2002).

In this section, we discussed some of the basic tenets of the relational dialectics approach (Baxter and Montgomery, 1996). In short, relational dialectics' core ideas are that (1) relating revolves around the dynamic interplay of dialectical tensions, (2) change is inherent to relationships and (3) to understand a given relation, we need to consider context. In the following section, we further refine these theoretical core ideas into concepts that offer analytical grip to study relations as dynamic change processes.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK: CORE CONCEPTS

Based on the arguments developed in the previous sections about relating dynamics and their interactions with framing dynamics in collaborative planning, this section establishes an analytical framework to empirically study these phenomena. We draw on the ontological view and concepts from the relational dialectics approach (Baxter and Montgomery, 1996), and on framing literature (e.g. Rein and Schön, 1993). Our aim with this framework is to offer analytical concepts that give guidance to systematically studying empirical instances of collaborative planning practices (cf. Blumer, 1954: 7).

The presented framework falls into two tracks. The first track contains concepts to study relating dynamics in collaborative planning practices, the second offers concepts for studying framing dynamics. Both dynamics are analytically distinguished but – following our arguments in the earlier section on the relating-framing interplay in collaborative planning – should not be seen as two separate spheres: they are simultaneously present and intertwined with each other in collaborative work, as two sides of one coin (Forester, 1999; Gualini, 2001; Healey et al., 2003).

Below, we first introduce the key concepts within each track. We then discuss how to analytically relate both tracks to each other in order to get insight in how both dynamics are linked in collaborative planning processes. The key concepts are illustrated with examples based on current running case study research in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. At the end of this section, we visualize our analytical framework in a conceptual figure.

Analysing relating dynamics (track 1)

This section presents three core concepts that are important for understanding relating dynamics: (1) relational narratives, (2) relational turning points and (3) critical relation events. We explain each concept and exemplify it with an illustration. This track of the framework builds on a narrative approach to studying relating dynamics. Through stories, human actors give expression to meaning – what a relation means to them – and, in these stories, they give accounts of the relational pathway as they experienced it. This focus on stories and storytelling is considered crucial for understanding the emergent relating dynamics (Sandercock, 2003). Stories are qualitative accounts of pathways and can provide insights about the generative mechanisms that fuel relational change processes (see Uprichard and Byrne, 2006).

Relational narratives

To capture how planners and stakeholders experience their mutual relations in a given collaborative planning system and the underlying dialectical tensions that fuel these experiences, we introduce the concept *relational narratives*. Relational narratives refer to the stories actors tell about their relations, both in everyday, naturally occurring talk, and in written texts and interviews (Baxter, 2011; Johnson and Long, 2002; Sandercock, 2003). When narrating about their relations, actors use a set of *specific labels, words, concepts and metaphors that have a certain coherence* to characterize their relations at a given moment in time (Baxter, 2011; Gergen and Gergen, 1983; Polkinghorne, 1988). Relational narratives reveal what relations mean to actors (i.e. relational identity), how they feel about the relation and see themselves within the relation (i.e. identity of the self) (Cools, 2011).

Part of these relational narratives is socio-cultural: meanings are rooted in cultural discourses on a specific relation. It is coloured by the 'Zeitgeist' and cultural context in which it is embedded (Baxter, 2011). On the other hand, the narrative is interpersonal: it reveals the 'localized' meaning and value actors give to their relations at a given time.

Relational narratives also embody a sense of evaluative appreciation (Gergen, 1994; Gergen and Gergen, 1983; Van de Ven and Poole, 2005), in respect to past relational identity/

identities. Gergen (1994) distinguishes three rudimentary forms of relational narratives: (1) a stability narrative, (2) a progressive narrative (incremental) and (3) a regressive narrative (decremental). The first refers to relational narratives that, in respect to other or prior narratives in the relation under study, remain unchanged in terms of moral evaluation. The narrative is different; the relation has changed, but not in terms of appreciation. Progressive narratives are narratives that suggest increments or upturns in relational experience, whereas regressive narratives refer to decrements or downturns. Box 1 provides an empirical illustration of a relational narrative manifesting in one of our running case studies, case Katendrecht (see also footnote 7).

Box 1: Example of a relational narrative.[7]

> Relational narratives come to the fore in stakeholders' stories about the collaborative process. In these stories – when asked for – stakeholders describe how they experienced their mutual relations. We collected such stories in our case studies. Case Katendrecht concerns the comprehensive area development and transformation of an old, deteriorated former harbour area into an attractive residential area (see also footnote 5). A project team was appointed to jointly develop and implement a future vision of the area. One of the stakeholders in case Katendrecht told us the following about the stakeholders' relations: initially, in the first years of the collaboration, he felt as if the collaboration was comparable to how a 'family company' works. In a family company, he described, 'there is respect for each other's interest and position'. At this point, he experienced the mutual relations as open and honest. He adds, 'although we had some fierce discussions, in the end we got along'. Stakeholders also openly exchanged information. In this story, there is a sense of positivity and this stakeholder emphasises how he values the openness of the relation. The episode of his story reflects how this stakeholder experienced the relations as positive. This is an example of what Gergen (1994) would call a 'progressive narrative'.

Relational narratives uncover prevailing meanings in a given local condition, at a specific point in time. These narratives are to a certain extent set and stable: they remain valid for some time. This does not mean a specific narrative is 'fixed', narratives are continuously shaped and reshaped (Gergen, 2009). Reshaping of narratives may be reflected in the addition or disappearance of specific labels or words in the prevailing narrative without the narrative undergoing profound change: the coherence and form of the narrative remains. When a relation is fundamentally reformulated and dialectical tensions redefined, a narrative's coherence and form is impaired. In that case, a 'new' narrative or story line emerges. This means a stakeholder may refer to different relational narratives in his or her account about the mutual relations, each narrative prevailing at different moments in time. Reference to multiple narratives suggests the relational experience has changed during his or her involvement. We elaborate on such 'change' moments in the next paragraph on relational turning points.

7 Note that this is a reflection of one particular stakeholder's story. In our research, we analyse all stories and compare them with each other to find similarities, differences or patterns across stories and stakeholders. We aim to construct the 'narrative union' across these stories with attention to striking or specific perspectival fluctuations.

Relational turning points

Relational narratives are continuously crafted and re-crafted, they will 'undergo continuous alteration as interaction progresses' (Gergen and Gergen, 1983: 256). Relations are never 'done deals', they continually unfold (Duck, 1994). Valuative and subjective meanings about relations thus change over time. This involves both incremental changes that do not lead to redefinitions or new understandings, and transformational changes. *Transformational change implies a reformulation of a relation, a rebalancing of a dialectical tension:* 'transformation is not simply an addition or unfolding of an existing theme, but a reformulation, an employing of a new vocabulary, a shift from one perspective to another' (Bolton, 1961: 236–237). The relational experience has changed and passes a certain 'threshold' (see Conville, 1998; Duck, 1994). Such a transformation brings about a new narrative to characterize mutual relations. These transformation moments are interesting since they mark a 'turning point' or 'breaking point' in the relating experience of actors. They are markers of how a relation develops (Graham, 1997). Box 2 offers an empirical illustration of a relational turning point occuring in a stakeholder's experience of the mutual relations in case Katendrecht.

Box 2: Example of a relational turning point.

> By focusing on change in the way stakeholders describe their mutual relations, relational turning points come to the surface. In the story of the stakeholder quoted above, there is positivity towards the mutual relations, at least in his description of the initial years of collaboration. However, later on, he contrasts this story with the current collaboration in the planning process. He describes it as closed, and explains, 'everybody follows his own path, with no regard for that of the others'. He talks about a 'stock market listed company' as the metaphor for a business-like, detached way of collaborating in contrast to his metaphor of the 'family company', which he experienced as more positive.

This changed description of the mutual relations, which has the character of a 'regressive narrative', marks a relational turning point: relations are redefined and a new vocabulary is used to characterize this new understanding. It shows how relations were rebalanced to more closeness at the expense of openness. In this particular episode, this was experienced as negative for the mutual relations.

Understanding relating dynamics implies analysing both relational narratives and 'turning points' herein. Both concepts are equally significant. Narratives are to compare with 'images' at specific points in time, whereas adding a focus on change and transition to the analysis also captures the 'turning points' herein. Combining these concepts reveals the 'movie' of a relation.

Critical relation events

The above concepts can yield a rich description of relating dynamics. They give insight in *how* relations evolve over time. However, it is also important to gain understanding of the reasons that fuel these dynamics. That is where the third key concept of our framework, *critical relation events*, comes in. These are *critical, meaningful incidents that have a decisive impact on the mutual relations, prompt transition and thus lead to the emergence of a new relational narrative*. Critical relation events are incidents that relational parties perceive as having altered their relations in profound ways (Baxter, 2004a). That can be happenings, acts, actions or even feelings that are perceived as meaningful for a specific relation (Langley, 1999).

Critical relation events are the 'antecedents' of relational turning points, and thus of the emergence of new relational narratives, which are then its 'consequence' (Smeyers and Levering, 1999). Roughly, there are two types of critical relation events: internal events that originate from the collaborative system itself, and external events 'from the outside'. Concerning the first, the trigger of a relational turning point lies *within* the collaborative planning system: the collaborative system itself is the generator of change (Halinen et al., 1999). The concept of internal events also includes transformative interactive behaviours of relational parties oriented at managing the relation. Thus, a transformative event might also be an intervention (varying in mindfulness and intention) of one or more relational parties. External events, on the other hand, originate outside the collaborative system: transition is triggered by external events or interventions from outside (Baxter and Erbert, 1999; Druckman, 2009). Box 3 provides an empirical illustration of a number of critical relation events that triggered a relational turning point in case Katendrecht.

Box 3: Example of critical relation events.

> Relations change, as we described and illustrated in the paragraphs above. Stakeholders also explain these changes and which events they found significant herein. The stakeholder quoted above listed several events that, in his view, added up to the turning point in his relational experience. One example of a critical event was the broadening of the development plans to a new piece of land (or plot) in the area. This plot became available later on in the project. Due to the broadening of the development, new stakeholders that had not been involved till then, now became relevant as partners. Collaboration and information concerning the development of the plot became fragmented and, as a result, there was information asymmetry between the stakeholders. Another example of a critical event in his story was the personnel changes in two stakeholders' organizations. These changes were experienced as disruptive for the mutual relations.

After having discussed the analytical concepts that give guidance to empirically researching relating dynamics in collaborative planning, we turn to the analytical concepts in the second track: the framing dynamics. The presented concepts and associated conceptualizations are drawn from framing literature.

Analysing framing dynamics (track 2)

Collaborative planning processes can be seen as interactive processes in which a struggle of frames or discourses takes place (Hajer, 2003). Different actors or stakeholders are brought together, and it is likely that they bring different views on the issue to the table: they define the situation in their own way, using different languages and rationalities to conceptualize the situation (Bouwen, 2001; Bouwen and Taillieu, 2004; Rein and Schön, 1993; Termeer, 1993).

In literature, different concepts are used to refer to the fact that multiple viewpoints to issues or problems exist. Relying on framing literature, we refer to this as 'frames' or 'frames of reference' (Schön, 1993). In this paragraph, we discuss this concept, together with the related concepts of discourse coalitions and frame configurations. In a sense, collaborative planning aims to tune the prevailing frames of different stakeholders in such a way that they are connected in a common perception of the issue (De Roo and Porter, 2007). In framing literature, this process of connecting different frames is referred to as frame alignment. Frames and discourse coalitions, frame configurations and frame alignment are central concepts in understanding framing dynamics. Below, we further conceptualize these concepts.

Frames, discourse coalitions and frame configurations

A first step in analysing framing dynamics is identifying the different frames of involved actors to the issue at stake, at a given point in time. Frames can be seen *as interpretive schemes by which actors conceive of specific situations, prioritize specific problems, include or exclude aspects and favour particular kinds of solutions* (Dewulf et al., 2004; Putnam and Holmer, 1992). Actors tend to have typical frames of issues, emphasizing certain aspects and ignoring others (Drake and Donahue, 1996). A frame includes at least three elements: an interpretation of the cause of a situation (a diagnostic message: what is this issue about?), a vision on the future or solution (a prognostic message) and an action perspective (what should I do?) (see Colville et al., 2013; Hajer, 1989). Frames thus shape preferred policy or planning choices and solutions. Frames are reflected in stakeholders' planning discourses: these are oral and written storylines in which stakeholders describe and define the planning issue as they interpret it.

Actors tend to seek support for their specific frames and discourses and try to organize around a set of comparable and overlapping storylines. If actors *reach consensus on a frame and the associated discourse or succeed in connecting or aligning their frames*, they form a so-called *discourse coalition* (Hajer, 1989).

Frame configuration then denotes the diversity and heterogeneity of frames in a given network as well as the degree to which some or more frames are aligned in discourse coalitions at a given point in time in collaborative planning processes (Dewulf et al., 2004). Frame configurations change over time: discourse coalitions may change, actors' frames may undergo change, new actors and thus new frames may be brought in or actors may even step out or over to other coalitions because of processes of alignment. We discuss this more in detail in the following paragraph on frame configuration change and frame alignment. In box 4, we present an empirical illustration of frames, discourse coalitions and frame configurations prevailing in one of our running case studies, case Vreewijk.

Box 4: Example of frames, discourse coalitions and frame configurations.

To reconstruct frames and discourse coalitions, documents are an appropriate entry point. In the key documents related to case Vreewijk, the different prevailing frames are clearly traceable. Case Vreewijk concerns the large-scale redevelopment and physical improvement of the housing stock in Vreewijk (see also Endnote 5). Stakeholders developed a vision of how the area has to be improved in the future. A project group, involving all important stakeholders, is appointed to implement this vision. The vision document reflects two frames on how to redevelop the area. Residents and tenants are in favour of conservation and renovation. They emphasise the cultural-historical value of the area. They are supported by different cultural-historical organizations from Rotterdam and abroad (discourse coalition A). In contrast, the developer and the city district of Feijenoord (part of Rotterdam), which the area is part of, are in favour of demolition and a newly built housing stock (discourse coalition B). Financially and technically, they argue, that is the most desirable solution. They frame this in terms of the importance of creating a life-proof and durable housing stock. Both frames are at odds and in the collaborative process stakeholders search for ways to reconcile both frames. The frame configuration at this point in the project thus entails two discourse coalitions.

Frame configuration change and frame alignment

Frame configurations are not stable, but change over time, bringing about *new constellations of frames and discourse coalitions* (Dewulf et al., 2004; Putnam and Holmer, 1992). We refer to this as *frame configuration change*.

Frame configuration changes result from changing discourse coalitions. Discourse coalitions may extend, break down or even disappear. Changes in discourse coalitions follow from processes of alignment (or disconnection) between stakeholders' frames. *Frame alignment refers to the processes by which different frames are linked together in a common frame* (Snow et al., 1986). Over time, stakeholders may establish new connections between frames, or, on the other hand, may break down existing ones, thereby changing the constellation of discourse coalitions in the collaborative system. This process of alignment or disconnection may be facilitated or impeded by frame updates or processes of reframing on actor level. Frame updates entail a reformulation of the issue: actors 'unfreeze' past definitions and reformulate new ones. They now emphasise other elements and develop

a new and different vision to the situation (Weick, 1995). As a result, actors may connect their frames to other actors than they did before, as such forming new discourse coalitions, or disconnect their frames from discourse coalitions which they were part of.

Configuration changes can also result from changing actor constellations. The inclusion of new actors brings in new frames; the exclusion of actors entails the disappearance of specific frames to the issue, thereby changing the constellation of frames and discourse coalitions. Box 5 provides an empirical example of a frame configuration change and frame alignment in case Vreewijk.

Box 5: Example of frame configuration change and frame alignment.

> In case Vreewijk, stakeholders succeeded in converging both frames. They jointly agreed upon an improvement program. At the basis of this alignment lays the compromise proposal of the alderman of Spatial Planning. He connects both frames in proposing 'preservation, unless…' as the starting point for redevelopment. This compromise proposal gives residents and tenants the necessary trust to move forward and, at the same time, gives the developer an opt-out: when there are financial and technical arguments to demolish and rebuild, then there is room to discuss this.

Analysis by means of the above concepts can give insight in framing dynamics and more in particular in configuration changes and processes of alignment in collaborative planning. As we have argued, this process of framing is intertwined with the relating dynamics in collaborative planning processes. If we want to understand how both dimensions are linked, we will have to analytically relate both tracks to each other. We elaborate on this in the next paragraph.

Connecting the tracks

The tracks presented above are relevant to research dynamic phenomena: they both enable the researcher to see development in collaborative planning practices throughout time. The first track, which focuses on relational narratives, turning points and events, provides insight in how relations evolve over time, that is, insight in the relating pathway. The second track yields a description of framing dynamics: it gives insight in changing frame configurations, and in processes of alignment and disconnection between different frames, that is, insight in the framing pathway. The concepts discussed in each track enable to collect fine-grained data on two parallel dimensions at work in collaborative processes. They yield process data and deal with dynamics on two dimensions of analysis that are temporally embedded.

In order to study the link between these two dimensions, we propose a visual mapping strategy which comprises of simultaneous presentation of the process data of both dimensions on a timeline (see Langley, 1999).

Figure 2.1 illustrates an imaginary relating and framing pathway and indicates how the concepts discussed help to describe and explain these pathways. The sloping lines indicate how relating and framing evolve and where there are change moments, that is, transitions, herein (see the zigzag line). As for the relating pathway, we also aim to understand what provoked change, so we also pay attention to the events that triggered change or a turning point.

The combined analysis and visual mapping of relating and framing pathways can give indications about how both dimensions are linked. For instance, the figure shows how – concerning these imaginary pathways – frame alignment does not occur as long as relations are experienced as negative (relational narrative A: regressive narrative). We also see that, after reaching a common frame (frame configuration B), frames diverge, but also quickly converge again (see the waving line following frame configuration B). This happens against the background of positive experiences with stakeholders' relations (relational narrative C: progressive narrative). In case Vreewijk, for example, we observed such a pattern. Stakeholders reconciled their frames in a joint improvement programme (see also Box 5). However, throughout the implementation of this programme, there were still disagreements on different aspects, such as the extent to which specific historical details could be modified in favour of living comfort of the houses. Yet, because stakeholders had confidence in their mutual relations, and labelled them, at that time, as 'open' and 'respectful', they easily found ways to reconcile their views. Here, stakeholders' positive relational experiences formed a firm basis to deal with the recurring frame divergences and

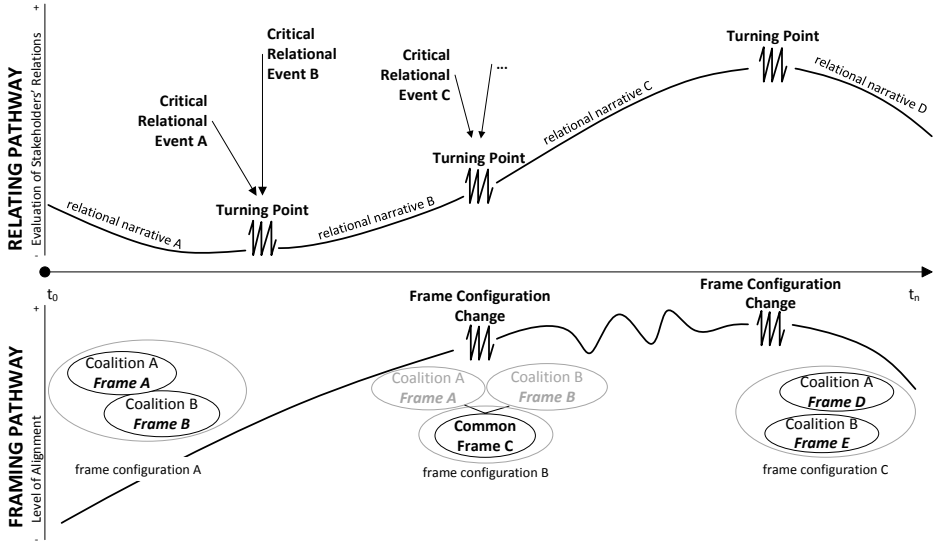

Figure 2.1. Visual map of relating and framing pathways.

to forge convergence. The figure further shows how, at some point, frame divergence is apparently too fundamental to be easily resolved and frame alignment is under pressure. This co-occurs with the prevalence of a regressive narrative (relational narrative D). In case Katendrecht, we saw an example of such a pattern. Although stakeholders agreed on the overall approach to the redevelopment of the area, they disagreed about the redevelopment of one specific plot. Residents opposed the city's proposal. Stakeholders did not manage to resolve these disagreements for several reasons. However, because of this continuing disagreement, relations quickly deteriorated.

The common expectation about the interplay of relating and framing pathways would be that positive relational turning points, bringing about a progressive narrative, will stimulate processes of alignment. However, we also expect that other patterns may become visible. This is similar to what Watzlawick and Beavin (1967) argue about the interplay between 'understanding', that is, closure on relational level, and 'agreement', that is, closure on substantive level:

> It is possible for two communicants to disagree about an objective issue but understand each other as human beings, to agree but fail to understand each other as human beings, or, to agree and to understand each other; by the same token, of course, two communicants may fail at both levels and, thus, both disagree with and misunderstand one another. (p. 6)

What is empirically interesting, then, is under which conditions specific patterns become visible. In other words, what kind of relational narratives, that is, relational settings at some point in time, generate alignment or frustrate alignment, and vice versa. This needs further investigation for which the proposed and discussed analytical framework might be used.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Stakeholders' relations are key in collaborative planning. They are the medium through which collaborative efforts are realized and shape planning processes and outcomes. In collaborative planning literature, theoretical and empirical focus has been mainly on exposing communicative and relational conditions for collaborative planning processes to be successful. Less attention has been paid to the dynamic nature of stakeholders' relations and the way this relational change process, or relational pathway, impacts on framing dynamics. Authors, who do attend to relating dynamics in collaborative planning (e.g. Forester, 1999; Healey et al., 2003), neither provide strong theoretical grip to study and explain relating dynamics, nor present analytical tools to unravel relating dynamics

and their interplay with framing dynamics in a systematic way. Yet, relating dynamics are pivotal for the collaborative planning process and shape framing dynamics. In this article, we therefore developed a framework to systematically analyse both dynamics and the way they interplay. This framework offers several valuable alternative insights in collaborative planning practices.

First and foremost, the framework allows to study relating dynamics in stakeholders' relations in a systematic way. There is still much to learn about this and about how these relational change processes impact on the planning process. Focusing on relating dynamics takes the researcher beneath the surface of the more visible and manifest processes in collaborative planning: it gives insight in how stakeholders experience, give meaning and value to their relations within collaborative systems and how they explain and make sense of what relationally happens. This is relevant since the way stakeholders understand and appreciate their relations informs the way they act in a given collaborative system (Duck, 1994; Uprichard and Byrne, 2006).

Using the relating dynamics framework also gives insight in relational pathways. First, by focusing attention on change and transition, the framework enables to capture the dynamic nature of relations. The framework draws attention to moments in which relations change (turning points) and as such, enables to describe *how* relations develop over time. Second, the framework enables to track down critical events that precede these 'turning points' and thus fosters understanding of *why* relations develop as they do. Insights in critical events offer explanations or 'reasons' for relational pathways (Haverland and Yanow, 2012). Furthermore, analysing the type of critical events and valence of specific events within and across planning practices may point to possible leverage points for intervention. Knowledge of these events can make policymakers and planners more aware about an event's impact on the relating dynamics playing in collaborative settings and make them more alert for possible effects. Third, mapping sequences between critical events, turning points and the emergence of new narratives can give insight in possible developmental pathways. Byrne and Callaghan (2014) refer to this as 'trending': the framework helps to map relational pathways of collaborative networks, describing and explaining evolution herein (p. 54).

Further, analysing relating dynamics together with the framing dynamics playing in planning practice offers some additional insights. Mapping both dynamics chronologically in a visual map enables the researcher to explicate how relating dynamics are linked with framing dynamics in collaborative processes. Tracking down temporal co-occurrence of turning points and frame configuration changes (towards or away from frame alignment) provides insight in relating–framing patterns. More specifically, analysing both dynamics

and comparing both pathways provides insight in what kind of relational narratives facilitate or hamper frame alignment. It also gives information about how framing dynamics shape the relating dynamics in their turn. Within and across case comparison provides the opportunity to reveal what kinds of patterns prevail in collaborative planning practices.

Each of these insights can help practitioners in collaborative planning practices to deal with the reality of planning and the messy, fluid nature of stakeholders' relations in different ways. First, focusing on dynamics makes planners more receptive to the fact that relational settings change over time and that it is change that is constant, rather than stability (Hochas as discussed in Forester, 1999: 89). However, the dynamic character of relations also requires planners to be relational flexible and capable to work and find ways to move forward within different relational settings. Learning about these different settings and what influences them, helps planners to prepare for dealing with a variety of planning practices. Second, learning about critical relational events that possibly mark relational turning points can – as they emerge – alert planners for possible transitions in the collaborative planning process. These signals then provide the opportunity for early responsive planning behaviour in making use of these turning points and in fostering productive long-lasting relationships. Finally, the framework provides insights in the way specific relational settings interplay with framing dynamics. This provides the opportunity for planning practitioners to see which relational settings and critical events hamper or facilitate frame alignment in planning processes. In this way, planners get ideas on how to develop and sustain common ground and frames to substantiate collaborative action.