

ESF Exploratory Workshop on
Soft spaces across Europe

Delft (Netherlands), 8 – 10 December 2010

Convened by:
Bas Waterhout

SCIENTIFIC REPORT

Contents

1. Executive summary	3
2. Introduction Statement	6
3. Scientific content of the event	13
4. Results, contribution to the future direction of the field, outcome	23
5. Final programme	25
6. Final list of participants	29
7. Statistical information on participants	31

1. Executive summary

General information

The ESF exploratory workshop on Soft spaces across Europe took place at the Research Institute OTB of Delft University of Technology, Delft (NL), from 9 to 10 December 2010. Two of the 29 persons invited had to cancel at the last minute due to illness (of a relative) or themselves (in this particular case a dislocated disc, which urged the person involved to stay in bed). The remaining 27 participants are affiliated with employers in 16 different countries. Four of them are female (one female is included in the cancellations). Ten participants are under 40 years of age and another nine are between their 40th and 50th anniversary. Most participants are educated as planners or geographers, whereas some have a history in political science.

Overall the workshop took place in a very positive and informal atmosphere. A substantial number of participants had already met each other at other occasions, in projects or at conferences, for example the annual conference of the Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP). Some participants had already taken part in a smaller workshop organized in January 2010 in Hamburg on the same theme. Other participants, some of which were entirely new to the emerging network and the theme, felt rapidly and easily at home, in terms of both the informal group setting and the topics discussed.



Photo: workshop participants posing in the hall of OTB Research Institute.

Theme and issues

The workshop's title is a direct reference to the title of a book by Haughton et al. (2010) on *The new spatial planning: Territorial management with soft spaces and fuzzy boundaries*, which deals with recent changes in spatial planning and land use management in the UK. It was found that

planning and policy delivery increasingly takes place in newly created, flexible and (often) temporal spaces: soft spaces with fuzzy boundaries. Soft space approaches complement and, as far as we know, do not come in place of statutory planning. They are a reaction on and reflection of the changing context in which planning aims to be effective and as such indicate a reworking of the boundaries of the planning profession. As of yet little is known about the governance of soft spaces.

Soft space governance arrangements are emerging all over Europe and at various geographical scales. A main aim of the workshop therefore was to compare soft space approaches across countries and finding out how approaches differ from each other or show similarities in terms of:

1. practical reasons to define new soft spaces and whether they are substantive, institutional, procedural;
2. initiative taking and involved stakeholders and whether they are public, private, and/or civic and what the balance is between them;
3. governance and whether these processes are transparent, open and indeed legitimate and democratically sound;
4. the relation to statutory planning and whether soft space approaches complement, replace, compete or can be seen as an evolution of statutory land use and strategic planning, and if so, how they differ;
5. their contextual explanation, how they reflect changes in society and whether they can be regarded a reaction on, for example, neo-liberalism, the post-modern society or the post political condition.

Outcomes and results

What are soft spaces? Or, as Wiechmann asks (see above – discussion day 1), what are they not? The question of definition still needs to be solved it was felt among the participants. In so doing, rather than presenting definite outcomes, the workshop mainly has produced and identified questions for further research. Outcomes and research questions are merely treated as one and the same.

In terms of conceptual clarity it was felt among the participants that there is a clear relation between 'content' of the soft space and 'drivers' in which content could act as an analytical parameter in order to distinguish between various types of soft spaces. The drivers were mostly linked to strategies of stakeholders underlying and whether they are development oriented (perhaps favouring a limited number of stakeholders) or, in contrast, are aiming at resistance.

The issue of softening and hardening; i.e. of spaces becoming softer in terms of institutional control or, as regularly seen a reflex of politicians, becoming harder due to imposing new forms of organisation on top of a previously soft space, such as is happening in the case of the Baltic Sea Region. A clear research line would be to explore what happens to the cooperation and its contents in a region that moves from soft to hard or vice versa.

An additional perspective was put on soft spaces in a sense of regarding them as temporary arrangements from the perspective of transition management. This might be what countries and regions have in common. In most places planning policies are in a stage of transition reflecting a broader development from welfare state to a new type of state model in which a new balance is to found within society, with some countries clearly moving into the direction of neoliberalism and others aiming to sustain a degree of collectivism albeit adapted to new forms of society.

Given the increasing complex and intricate interrelationships in society it was generally concluded and accepted that soft spaces with fuzzy boundaries have simply become 'a fact of life'.

In terms of a research agenda three clear directions of research have been identified:

- Soft spaces as an object of study, i.e. interpretations, contents, form etc. Are they new, are the more numerous

- Soft spaces as an analytical tool, i.e. to better understand the development of space and place.
- Soft spaces as a deliberative strategy

The relation between soft spaces and spatial planning concerns another field of interest. It was felt that planning is increasingly less able or less important as a means to develop new forms of territoriality. Land use management may, in contrast, be more suitable to deal with emerging soft spaces and their fuzzy and fluid characteristics. If this is indeed true there is a need to critically assess the role and relevance of planning policies against:

- the changing geographies characterised by overlapping, more fluid and networked patterns,
- the changing relation between government and society/market
- the change of welfare states to new models of society

Follow-up activities

In general there was a very positive spirit during and at the end of the workshop and a genuine feeling that we had been venturing into new territory. A pro-active attempt was made to identify follow up activities and opportunities for joint research. They include:

- Sustaining and elaborating the soft space research network
- Applying for funding for future joint research
- Publications

2. Introduction Statement

By means of introduction participants have been supplied with the following statement prior to the workshop. The statement also works fine as an introduction to the scientific report.

The case

Planning and policy delivery increasingly takes place in newly created, flexible and (often) temporal spaces: soft spaces. Soft space governance arrangements are emerging all over Europe and at various geographical scales. Soft space approaches complement and, as far as we know, do not come in place of statutory planning. They are a reaction on and reflection of the changing context in which planning aims to be effective and as such indicate a reworking of the boundaries of the planning profession. As of yet little is known about the governance of soft spaces.

The aim of this ESF Exploratory Workshop is to enrich our understanding of planning and governance of soft spaces across Europe. The objective is to find out how various approaches compare, if they can be found equally across Europe, and to what extent they share common elements. Important questions relate to the contextual explanation of planning for soft spaces. What are the main drivers behind the emergence of these soft spaces, and are they comparable all over Europe? Going one step further, the workshop aims to explore from a more planning theoretical perspective what the conceptual meaning is of soft space planning and how it changes our thinking about planning and planning research.

There is increasing evidence that planning in Europe is transforming in order to deal with changing spatial and institutional contexts. A variety of informal approaches can be observed that aim at finding effective solutions to meet today's challenges. Practitioners move forward by the objective of 'getting things done' (see: Allmendinger & Haughton 2009), which is becoming an ever more powerful rationale to legitimize all kinds of new and experimental approaches. Common in these approaches, or at least so it seems, are a new treatment of space and place (Davoudi & Strange 2009), the focus on (partly) integrated and joint-up solutions, on governance and the role of private and civic stakeholders in policy delivery. Also these processes are characterized by informal and self-regulated forms of decision making and legitimacy, which in the literature are referred to under the umbrella term of deliberative democracy and network governance (Sorensen & Torfing 2009, Dryzek 2000). More in general it can be argued that planning for soft spaces relates to pragmatic solutions to deal with the fragmented governance and spatial landscapes of our increasingly post-modern societies.

It is not all positive though. As per usual with pragmatic solutions that break with established routines some existing issues are addressed but others appear. Among them there is the traditional planning issue concerning the relation between visions and projects. Soft space approaches form a sort of hybrid of these: they are project-like in their pragmatic orientation and focus on delivery, but treat and use space in a more visionary way. And this leads to a second issue; that of participation and legitimacy and, related to this, possible favoring of objectives of powerful groups over the soft voices. If it is a vision, then whose vision is it? If it is a project, then who is benefiting from it? So there may be dark sides, too, related to planning for soft spaces. From this perspective their might perhaps be a need also to establish from a more normative perspective a set of criteria to assess when and where planning for soft spaces is desirable and in which form.

Soft space approaches in the UK

Whereas a discussion on planning and governance for soft spaces is new at the level of Europe, a considerable amount of (ongoing) research to the emergence of soft spaces has been carried out in the United Kingdom. In analyzing the impact of devolution on planning a new vocabulary emerged around the central concept of soft spaces. Recent work by Allmendinger and Haughton highlights how public authorities seek new ways to treat space and place in the UK. Based on a number of

case studies these authors see a new type of planning emerge that is created around what they call 'soft spaces and fuzzy boundaries' (Allmendinger and Haughton 2009; Haughton et al. 2010). Such spaces and boundaries are not stable in time nor in space, but form for a certain period of time the focus of policy delivery with regard to, for example, housing, infrastructure, economic development, nature, environment or indeed territorial cohesion.

With regard to the use of soft spaces and fuzzy boundaries in the UK these authors conclude the following:

1. "Soft spaces represent a deliberate attempt to insert new opportunities for creative thinking, particularly in areas where public engagement and cross-sectoral consultation has seen entrenched oppositional forces either slowing down or freezing out most forms of new development.
2. The 'hard' and 'soft' spaces of governance are mutually constitutive, such that one cannot work without the other. The aim is not to replace 'hard' institutional spaces with 'softer' ones, rather to create complementary and potentially competing opportunities for development activities to focus around, whether at some kind of 'sub' regional or 'sub' local government scale.
3. The soft spaces of governance are becoming more numerous and more important as part of the institutional landscape of spatial planning and area regeneration.
4. Soft spaces often seem to be defined in ways that are deliberately fluid and fuzzy in a sense that they can be amended and shaped easily to reflect different interests and challenges." (Haughton et al. 2010: 52).

Based on a DAAD sponsored workshop organized in January 2010 at the HafenCity University Hamburg and on the AESOP conference 2010 in Helsinki, it can be concluded that there are clear indications that what is true for planning in the UK is also true for planning in Europe, at least to a large extent. As a first step to find out, this ESF exploratory workshop aims to relate findings with each other on the planning of soft spaces across Europe.

Examples of planning for soft spaces across Europe

The examples of the UK apart, soft spaces for planning can be found in amongst others the Netherlands (Randstad 2040, metropolitan region Amsterdam and South Wing), Germany (*überregionale Partnerschaften* and Metropolitan regions), France (*planification stratégique*). Also at cross border and transnational level approaches can be found. Examples are well known initiatives such as Saar-lor-lux, the Trinational Eurodistrict Basel, Oresund cooperation, Vienna-Bratislava-Gyor (Tatzberger 2008), the Alpine-Adriatic attempts to cooperate (Fabbro & Haselsberger 2009), cooperation between the Netherlands and Flanders around the Scheldt estuary (De Vries 2008) and so on.

The EU itself also stimulates soft space arrangements. At the highest geographical level, at least for the moment, the eye catching EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea can be found. Eye catching and much discussed because this type of strategy developed by the European Commission services at the request of the Baltic Sea Council may form the start, under the label of territorial cohesion, of a whole new era in EU policy delivery. Already, the Commission is working on a Danube Strategy and its work programme for 2010 mentions possible strategies for the Alpine Area, the Mediterranean and the North Sea amongst others. But also at domestic level the EU exerts influence. For example in Poland EU regional policy leads to "hybrid mezzo-space" (Sagan & Lee 2005) where new composite regional entities are pitched against 'old' well-institutionalised regions in competition for resources. In Italy the ministry promoted a study to

Whilst these examples differ in terms of history, maturity, effectiveness, stakeholders and institutional context they all form expressions of a perceived need to jump across geographical

administrative borders in order to address spatial issues that do not limit themselves to hard spaces. Depending on functional relations addressed the emerging soft space governance forms may, over time, vary in terms of geographical reach, scope as well as stakeholder composition. Although many soft space arrangements are public sector led, there is increasing evidence of private and civic stakeholder involvement and initiative, such as is the case in Basel.

Comparing soft space approaches

Given the different spatial, institutional, stakeholder and policy contexts across Europe it can hardly be assumed that soft space approaches are identical. This is even more so where soft spaces at a transnational scale are concerned.

A main aim of this workshop therefore is to compare soft space approaches with each other. While they share a couple of characteristics as listed above, there seem to be differences too. So, this workshop wants to find out how the approaches differ from each other in terms of:

1. practical reasons to define new soft spaces and whether they are substantive, institutional, procedural;
2. initiative taking and involved stakeholders and whether they are public, private, and/or civic and what the balance is between them;
3. governance and whether these processes are transparent, open and indeed legitimate and democratically sound;
4. the relation to statutory planning and whether soft space approaches complement, replace, compete or can be seen as an evolution of statutory land use and strategic planning, and if so, how they differ;
5. their contextual explanation, how they reflect changes in society and whether they can be regarded a reaction on, for example, neo-liberalism, the post-modern society or the post political condition.

The notion of space and place

Whereas the main focus of the workshop will be on the phenomenon of soft spaces and the planning approaches related to them, on a meta-level it also wants to address the question how soft space approaches will influence planning?

Soft spaces are defined for specific (though mutually different) objectives. As such soft spaces are nothing new in a sense that planning has for longer times dealt with spaces that were defined, for example, at a city regional level, in-between the regional and municipal administrative boundaries or as functional areas, which do not comply with administrative space either. Yet, what makes that the current approaches stand out is basically that they come with what in our understanding are new forms of planning: 'soft planning'.

Soft planning is directly related to the notion of soft spaces, in a sense that the latter cannot do with statutory planning alone. This has much to do with the nature and characteristics of soft spaces. Space, in particular when it is soft (in fact, it is always soft!), is no easy concept and this is why, according to Faludi (2010), "planners are notoriously vague about it: their object. They seem to prefer space to be hard. It makes life easier to think in terms of containers but surely, between them, the many overlapping spaces in which we conduct our lives are more like a bundle of electric wires: Each time I need one, I have to disentangle it from the rest." Places are even more difficult to understand. Place is like a pudding: we can only experience the combined result of all the ingredients. However, the ingredients themselves and their quantity largely remains a black box. So, space, just like place, is a complex historically, geographically and socially multi-layered concept. Place itself as an intellectual concept and planning principle is moving to the center of

attention in recent academic literature (Healey 2010; Friedmann 2010). Dealing with space and place requires tailormade informal rather than formal approaches that respect the diversity of stakeholders that are living in it and make use of it.

Planners at the time did not, however, draw the conclusion that soft spaces need soft planning. Instead they clamoured for yet another hard container, a special purpose authority for planning, also referred to as rescaling. However, if ever it succeeds, the search for other containers only gives temporary relief. Activity patterns overflow, defining new spaces and seemingly requiring new territorial realignments. Rather than searching for the holy grail of adequate boundaries and an appropriate division of responsibilities, planners should accept the mismatch between hard and soft spaces as a fact of life.

Soft space approaches put into context

Now, the emergence of the governance and planning of soft spaces indicates a change in the way that societies deal with their territories, their spaces and places. What this change exactly involves remains to be seen. This workshop aims to discuss the scope and boundaries of these changes and aspires to assess whether the change is significant. An important question is whether it is the planners themselves that are changing the paradigm? In several cases, it has been primarily non-planners but sectoral policy makers or private stakeholders that initiated change and in so doing forcing planning to react and engage in informal and soft governance approaches, or soft planning.

In understanding what and indeed *if* something is going on, we need to approach these new practices from two directions. At this moment our main task is first to analyze cases of governance of soft spaces in depth and understand in detail what is happening there. About half of the contributions to the workshop will be targeted at this aim. A second task is to contextualize these developments and create a framework that helps us understanding which processes at a deeper level explain the emergence of these processes. This is what the other contributions will be about. A first glimpse of such a framework can be found below where the emergence of soft spaces is placed in the context of the post-modern society as well as how it fits in the various philosophies and theories of planning.

At a more fundamental level, the planning and governance of soft space can be understood as a (further) departure of the modern state. It is the opposite of the planning of hard spaces, being the legacy of modernist thinking and policy making. Planning for soft spaces could be regarded a response to the general trend of the changing nation state and the decline of government control. Although 'hard' spaces, marked by national, provincial and local borders, have crucially determined the lives, identities and geographical reach of citizens and companies, they increasingly sit uneasily with spatial structures, processes and the way in which we use our land. Globalisation and the rise of network societies in particular make this problem appear acute.

Maarten Hajer talks in this respect about "the implosion of the territorial order of modern government, which requires us fundamentally to rethink the basis of effective political intervention, and hence of policy making at institutions, cultural adherences and societal processes converged on the level of the nation-state ... now that this *territorial synchrony* is broken, the classical modernist institutions lose the implicit support and assisting power of aligning socio-economic and cultural adherences." Hajer (2003: 183) If this is true for governance in general, then it is certainly true for territorial governance systems, which, being about the optimal allocation of the resource space to various 'functions', is classically thus prefaced upon the existence of a bounded space under the jurisdiction of an authority. Soft planning for soft spaces thus might form the pragmatic solution to a post-modern situation and indicate the first steps towards such a fundamentally rethinking of planning.

Are we talking about the demise of the nation-state and its multi-tiered system of regional and local jurisdictions? In common with various other commentators (e.g. Swyngedouw 2005, Brenner 1999, Hajer 2003), we suggest not. Policy interventions are still dependent on the institutions of

the nation-state. This is reflected, too, in our observation above, concerning 'hard' (administrative) and 'soft' space governance mutually relying on each other.

However, both the effectiveness and the legitimacy of nation-state institutions are seriously constrained. The concept of a nation-state, even if it is multi-tiered, as a power to intervene in social processes is increasingly at odds with today's geographies, economic processes and horizontal and individualized societies. This process is accelerated by supranational political decision making arenas such as the European Union and intergovernmental organizations like the UN and WHO that even further undermine the state's direct control systems. Social processes can no longer be characterized or easily demarcated in geographical terms, let alone be defined by national borders. Many processes find their origin in local or global trends, as well as everything in between, and can hardly be dealt with at one particular geographical scale. As a result of multiple overlapping and conflicting processes taking place at various geographical scales, our societies have become fluid or splintered and territories fragmented. Within this landscape, literally and figuratively, the state is looking for new ways to influence. This has resulted in a number of phenomena such as meta-governance approaches, referring to the 'governance of self-governance' (Jessop 2004; Sorensen & Torfing 2009), decision making on the basis of deliberate democracy and, in order to get a grip on complexity, the massive involvement in policy making of experts. The latter occurs to the extent that their dominant influence can lead to a so-called post political condition, a situation in which decisions are taken on the basis of an expert induced seemingly all-encompassing and not-to-escape discourse (Oosterlynck & Swyngedouw 2010; Swyngedouw 2009; Paddison 2009).

The governance of soft space, which aims to address and relate multiple ambitions and challenges at the same time within a loosely defined area and among a flexible range of stakeholders and participants, can be regarded a pragmatic reflection to this situation. Depending on who has taken the initiative, the public planning agency, other public actors or civic or private actors, soft spaces can be regarded both a way to regain control over society and spatial development (in case of the planning agency) and an example of deliberate strategy making of non-public stakeholders to take control in their own hand. This can be done in order to either compensate for the absent state or, more likely perhaps, to simply grasp the opportunity provided by the institutional void and pursuing one's own objectives. It is easy to see that soft planning for soft spaces thus can refer to various situations, which, depending on one's perspective, can be regarded both positive and negative. The contributions to the workshop will present cases that address both these perspectives and therewith represent as much as possible the full range of today's soft planning approaches in Europe.

In relation to the above a hypothesis could be that depending on the extent to which a state has gone through post-modernist processes and shifted from a government to governance model, soft space approaches are more numerous in certain parts of Europe than in other parts. A stocktaking exercise needs to be done at the workshop to assess whether indeed this is the case, and if so, which contextual factors are dominant in explaining this. Currently known cases suggest that soft space approaches are a reflection of as well as a practical way to deal with ongoing processes of globalization, neo-liberalisation and post-political decision making.

Soft planning for soft spaces from a theoretical perspective

There is a need, too, to understand how the emergence of planning for soft space fits into our theoretical thinking about planning. If anything, there is not such a thing as one 'planning theory'. Rather several schools of theory exist at the same time side by side and partly overlapping (Allmendinger 2009). Each of them emphasizes different aspects of planning and brings forward its own interpretation of what planning is, should be and how it functions in reality. In this sense it is interesting to analyze planning for soft spaces from the perspective of today's dominant schools of planning thought: communicative planning, post-modern planning and neoliberal planning. A fourth and fifth school worthy of investigation are that of pragmatism and planning as advocacy. Although

it may be early to raise the issue, the hypothesis is that planning for soft spaces forms a common ground for each of these theoretical perspectives.

In the current diverse European political, societal and spatial landscapes, however, it is highly unlikely that planning for soft spaces addresses the same theoretical perspectives in the same way across Europe. Despite globalization and Europeanisation national societies do still differ from each other, and will remain to do so. Clearly, planning in the UK, for example, is much stronger grounded in a neo-liberal context than planning in some other European countries. Similarly, soft spaces at a cross border or transnational scale such as the Baltic Sea Strategy should be framed in an EU or cross border context, where there might not be any planning thought at all, or at least not explicitly. So, the dominant style of planning may differ from country to country and region to region and, depending on the local situation, planning for soft spaces may reflect different planning philosophies. In so doing, planning for soft spaces may represent in some places a more upbeat feeling and be regarded as a new promising way forward, whereas in other places there may be more attention for the downsides of soft planning for soft spaces. Whatever the answer is, scholars do have an important obligation to fleshing out these emerging soft space governance approaches in order to understand and to criticize the way that we plan, use and treat our land.

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3. Scientific content of the event

Day 1: 9 December

Morning Session 1: Setting the scene

“Planning and governance for soft spaces - the plan for the workshop”

Bas Waterhout

- Introduction of workshop and soft spaces with fuzzy boundaries
- Several hypotheses and examples of soft spaces across Europe.
- Main thesis: spatial development increasingly takes place without spatial planning policies being influential.
- In order to understand spatial development, planning and management the focus of research should shift from analysing spatial planning policy performance to analysing soft spaces as the new areas where initiatives and (sectoral) policies converge.

“Soft spaces and neoliberal spatial governance”

Phil Allmendinger & Graham Haughton

- Elaborate overview of evolution of UK/English planning since 1970s and the scales and soft spaces addressed over the years as expression of particular planning/economic development political thinking.

Discussion

Main topic of the discussion was whether neo-liberalism and soft spaces are related or not and whether neo-liberalism could or should be the (only) starting point of our analysis. It was argued that, although many European countries follow either implicit or explicit a neo-liberal political agenda, this cannot be understood as being the only or dominant contextual factor that explains the emergence of soft spaces.

Morning Session 2: Developing a framework for analysis (Part 1)

Presentation 1 “Planning in neo-liberal times: Literature Survey 1990-2010 of Neo-liberal Policies for Urban Development”

Tore Sager

Overview of influences of neoliberalism on planning. Summarized in ten points:
Expanding the use of private solutions to urban problems:

- Public-private partnerships
- Private sector involvement in financing and operating transport infrastructure
- Privatization of public space and sales-booster exclusion
- Privately governed and secured neighbourhoods
- Quangos organizing market-oriented urban development

More competition and freer use of private property:

- Competitive bidding
- Property-led urban regeneration

Serving developers and their favoured customers:

- Flexible zoning and special business-friendly zones
- Gentrification
- Urban development by attracting the “creative class”

Presentation 2 “Postpolitics in planning: the case of Brussels Airport”

Stijn Oosterlynck

- Concept of post-politics refers to public participation processes that on the face of it seem open, but in reality are foreclosed by the main actors (in this particular case Brussels airport authority, Brussels government and DHL international parcel service) in terms of the themes that can be addressed and the outcomes that can be negotiated.
- Airport noise could be understood as a soft space, but more importantly, post-politics, i.e. the situation where no real open political decision making can occur, may be a more wide-spread phenomenon that where deliberate soft space development and planning is concerned.
- Outcome of such processes are usually partial solutions that disregard specific interests, which are ruled out beforehand. Thus potentially leading to fierce and sustained opposition by non-heard/included groups of stakeholders and eventually unstable coalitions and local societies.

Presentation 3 “Fuzzy images and possibility spaces. Using visualisations for spatial strategies”

Agnes Förster

- Presentation addresses methodology, based on real life case studies/workshops organised by amongst others the presenter in Munchen and Switzerland, that help local stakeholders to make sense of soft spaces they are living and working in and aim to strategically develop.
- Methodology based on joint mapmaking, facilitated by several tools and assignments, ought to create an open atmosphere in which a variety of selected stakeholders create joint understanding of issues, challenges, problems and possible planning/policy solutions.
- The result often is drafted map indicating the main characteristics of a loosely defined area and highlighting specific areas of future action.

Discussion:

Because of the quite heterogeneous character of the presentations the discussion focused not on a single topic but addressed each of the presentations. Many issues related to neo-liberalism had already been addressed before the break.

Questions were raised with regard to postpolitics and why the Brussels case was an example of ‘failure’. For whom? For DHL, for the government or for society? And whether the problem was now simply transferred to Dresden, the new distribution headquarters of DHL? In essence it was considered failure because there has never been created a situation of true ‘open speech’. The participatory process was thematically limited from the outset, due to specific conditions posed by DHL.

Other questions were raised in relation to visualisation and whether it really concerned soft spaces and facilitates decision making with local stakeholders even if they were not trained/part of planning/policy administrations.

Afternoon Session 1: Transnational Soft spaces

Presentation 1 “When soft spaces harden: The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region”

Peter Schmitt and Jonathan Metzger

- The Baltic Sea area is considered a long term laboratory of transnational regional development strategy making. Based on a partly shared history characterised by trade across the Baltic Sea, since the 1980s several generally perceived successful attempts of joint strategy making have been undertaken. VASAB in the 1990s is a prime example. In terms of delivery the strategies have often been regarded disappointing. Nevertheless, the Baltic Sea Region could be seen as one of the most persistent and active transnational soft spaces in Europe.
- Currently the cooperation is revamped by, interestingly, a European Commission led EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR). A curious element of this new strategy is that the

Nordic states themselves have asked the Commission to develop this strategy (something that inspired other transnational areas in Europe as well, see below).

- Developing the strategy led to a remarkable cross-sectoral approach within the Commission itself. The strategy itself, not counting more than some 12 pages, is nothing more than a more or less coherent document bringing together the several existing and ongoing EU policy programmes.
- Main thesis of the presentation is that the Baltic Sea Region soft space currently underwent a process of 'hardening'. It increasingly adopts elements of hard spaces.
- More generally it is hypothesised that soft as well as hard spaces go through various stages of either hardening and softening over time.

Presentation 2 "Flexible Geographies in Transnational Planning – an EU Macro Regional Strategy for the Danube Region on the way"

Alois Humer

- The Danube region is another example of a transnational macro region for which the European Commission develops a strategy. In this sense it is comparable to that Baltic Sea Region, yet, the level of institutionalisation and coherence is lower.
- Flexible geography: the space of intervention depends on the issue or project at stake. In general the strategy is action oriented.
- Danube space is very heterogeneous (geographically as well as politically), with countries such as Germany on the source of the river and Bulgaria and Romania on the source, with amongst others Serbia, Croatia and so forth in between. The question could be raised whether apart from the Danube, there are any other binding elements or common problems that urge for a strategy for this area.
- Similar to the EUSBSR the Danube strategy is based on the principles of the three no's: no new funding, no new institutions, no new legislation. A possible fourth principle could be the 'hands off' policy of the European Commission as regards the strategy's implementation. These principles may point into a direction of governance for soft spaces in general.

Presentation 3 "Territorialisation of cross border cooperation? Spatial development in the Greater Region (former 'Saar-Lor-Lux+')"

Tobias Chilla

- The Greater Region may be one of the oldest in terms of forging a cross national (spatial) policy agenda. Based on socio-economic and governance analyses (using the DELPHI method), several aspects of this soft space are brought to attention in comparison to other comparable spaces in Europe: commuting rate (high); governance mismatch (levels and competencies of involved bodies do not always match); barriers to cooperation (no political will, lack of common strategy, number of involved actors etc.); fields in which cooperation is required (transport, multi lingualism, R&D, spatial planning, professional mobility); possible 'consensus labels' (cross border cooperation, governance, polycentrism, metropolitisation etc).
- Determining the borders of this area proves to be difficult and it was found that they vary depending on (national/regional) perspective and purpose / thematic interest.
- In terms of a 'cross border polycentric strategy' two trends can be observed: a movement from flexible/liberalised situation towards a more formally institutionalised situation and 2) a trend from a 'soft space' towards a 'hard space', in particular under the guise of searching for investments, which require a certain amount of 'hardness' and certainty.

Discussion:

The theme introduced by the first presentation on dynamics and the softening and hardening of space attracted much of the attention. It was generally assumed that indeed such processes take place, but also that it is difficult to think of useful indicators in order to monitor/analyse such long term processes which may take place in time frames spanning more than, in cases, a century.

Questions were raised regarding the territorial delimitation of areas. In particular as regards the Danube space it was questioned what the common interest or denominator was or could be. This was also reflected in the presentation itself, hinting at the technical operational character of the strategy.

The example of the Greater Region was regarded as being different from the two strategies, in particular as regards historical attempts to foster cooperation, but here the main question was to whom is this region, framed in terms of the Greater Region, actually beneficial? Which stakeholders have a true interest in it?

Afternoon Session 2: Domestic cases

Presentation 1 “Soft spaces in/across Italy? Emerging explorations in a changing context for planning” Umberto Janin Rivolin

- Overview of soft spaces and various policy approaches in Italy. Based on various planning as well as sectoral examples it is claimed that there is an emerging trend both at national and regional level towards reconceptualising space in softer terms in order to address issues and challenges more effectively. Nevertheless, many of the explorations have not yet led to application in practice for example in the form of more flexible governance arrangements and new informal planning spaces.
- Examples are: water basin management, agricultural pacts, programmes of urban renewal and sustainable development (PRUSST), territorial pacts, at national level and various local urban and regional approaches.
- Role of EU regional policy is apparent in many of the examples, in particular in the ‘Strategic territorial platforms’ document as developed by the ministry of infrastructure.

Presentation 2 “Planning soft spaces – reflections from Spain”

Ximo Farinos Dasi

- This presentation draws attention to the role of the market and private stakeholders in planning and place based development processes, which is large in the case of Spain.
- Soft space strategies are a concern in Spain as well, but for now, despite a few more or less successful attempts and studies, more in theory than in practice.

Presentation 3 “From spatial planning to spatial governance or the persistence of modernist strategic spatial planning - The case of housing in the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area”

Jochem de Vries

- The key issue in discussing Amsterdam Metropolitan Area refers to the tension between the modernist state and institutions, which are grounded in ‘hard space’, and the policy issues that are framed at a higher territorial scale (of the AMA): a soft space. In so doing a more fundamental issue is addressed referring to the question whether soft space planning and approaches require institutional change?
- It is concluded that modernist institutions such as housing corporations and public administrations still have a very high stake in the planning of housing. This is in particular illustrated by the planning approach being taken which is firmly grounded in a modernist approach backed by forecast scenario’s, calculations etc which barely seem to reflect the actual demand of local inhabitants, and therewith the basic characteristics of a soft space. Strangely, nobody questions the 150.000 houses that result from the calculations. Nobody, at least none of the involved stakeholders, has an interest to ask as it would damage their own interests.
- It could be questioned whether it is relevant to speak, in this respect, of a soft space approach at all. The potential for governance is actually restricted by the same forces that call for governance, i.e. the housing corporations.

Discussion

An observation based on these presentations was that planning is still being done, but not by traditional planners, but by sector specialists. Sectors seem to position themselves increasingly strategically which amongst others shows from strategic spatial sectoral plans. In so doing, sectors are aware of the cross-cutting nature of their policies. The question was raised: is this a problem? Should planning stay on top or should we look for alternative governance models too?

Several mechanisms are applied: meta-governance, programmes, sectoral programmes and strategies etc.

Discussion and reflections - day 1

Introduction statement

Thorsten Wiechmann (*author of text below*)

Introduction statement to the discussion and reflections at the end of day 1

Reflecting today's presentations and the related discussions it is possible to distinguish two meta-arguments in the debate on soft spaces: 1.) a critical reflection of Soft Spaces and 2.) a focus on the potentials of Soft Spaces. The perspectives of these arguments are then widened by taken a dynamic point of view into account. Let me elaborate on these points and then derive three major questions from this.

1.) Soft Spaces can be perceived as **spatial arenas for de-politised neo-liberal agendas**. They seem to replace formal democratic arenas. Soft Spaces can be seen as a political resource that is used by – powerful – actors to serve their interests. In this meaning Soft Spaces seem to be non-democratic, non-legitimized spaces. Instead Soft Spaces become stages for de-politised balancing acts pretending that a general consensus is possible and denying that the underlying antagonisms lead to a partial ungovernability. Soft Spaces as flexible geographies or variable geometries can also intentionally be used to weaken state governments (like in the case of the European Commission with regard to the member states). The stated fashion of metropolitan strategic plans to compete with other cities is another observation in line with the neoliberal argument.

2.) A different perception of Soft Spaces focuses on their **potential for new solutions to unsolved societal issues**. Here, Soft Spaces do **NOT** replace existing democratic arenas; rather they function as substitutes for formal arenas that are missing. They come into play when there is a lack of hard spaces (like in the cases of transnational cooperation areas or river basins). They may also work as an instrument of territorial cohesion. They may offer new options when there is a mismatch between the administrative and the functional areas. Soft Spaces may form an appropriate spatial form for increasingly fragmented societies. From a planning point of view Soft Spaces provide opportunities to work creatively as in these contexts planners would not just have to follow rules of statutory planning. Planning can be performed as a truly creative effort, not as a bureaucratic effort. Following the second meta-argument Soft Spaces are an outcome of a pragmatic attempt to solve problems that cannot be solved in the given spaces. Soft Spaces may be an inevitable side effect of the shift from government to governance (this question can also be raised from the neo-liberal point of view as governance theory is to a large extent based on economic theories).

During the workshop these antagonistic perspectives were widened by taking a **dynamic aspect** into account. One might indeed question if Soft Spaces are a spatial expression of an ongoing transformation. Do they constitute an intermediate stage after the stable formations and fixed spaces of the past have disappeared to a certain extent? Are Soft Spaces blurred because we do not yet have (or see) a new order? Are Soft Spaces the dynamic spatial form of the shift from the post-war fordistic model to a new post-fordistic regulation mode? Do we perceive some new spatial patterns that we have not really understood (yet)? Can Soft Spaces harden? Are Soft Spaces not-yet-hard-spaces / not-yet-settled places? Is it a process from extraordinary spaces to ordinary spaces? Is it a step in a sequential process? Or can hard spaces also soften? Are Soft Spaces just a second best solution if hard spaces are not available?

Based on today's discussions three basic questions came to my mind:

1. **What are Soft Spaces?** What are the unique characteristics of Soft Spaces?
So far we have an idea of what Soft Spaces are not respectively what they don't have:
 - No clear boundaries – instead they have flexible, fuzzy boundaries
 - No clear time-frame, no ending date, no eternal perspective – instead they seem to be temporal
 - No (particular) regulations / No legislations
 - No (particular) instruments / No (particular) funding
 - No (particular) institutions / No (particular) administrations
 - No central control, no steering subject, no strategist (at least if we think of a strategist like a general in a tent sending orders to the front)
2. We have seen in this workshop a variety of examples. However it seems to be debatable whether Soft Spaces are basically **a new perspective** to describe reality **or** are Soft Spaces a (may be still poor) description of **a new reality**?
At least in German spatial planning we know informal initiatives with no clear boundaries since more than 100 years. So, **what is really new** with regard to Soft Spaces?
To me, it seems clear that it is a new perspective, but empirical research is needed to proof that reality has substantially changed with the appearance of Soft Spaces. Maybe Soft Spaces are not new but more frequent and more important than in the past.
3. Finally: **Does spatial planning matter in Soft Spaces?** Following the economic logic one might argue that spatial management not spatial planning is demanded for Soft Spaces. Projects and implementation guidelines instead of spatial plans might fit better to Soft Spaces. Nevertheless many authors mentioned strategic (spatial) planning as an increasingly important approach in Soft Spaces. But what kind of strategic planning is meant? A rationalistic, analysis- and expertise-based process with intentional planning as guidance for subsequent decisions? Or do we have to think in terms of emergent strategies, of adaptive planning approaches without central control, with gradual adjustments and discourse framing instead of linear influencing induced behaviour? Is it more about giving orientation and facilitating learning processes by autonomous actors? In other words: the nature of planning for Soft Spaces should be further discussed!

Day 2 – 10 December

Morning Session 1: Experiences in Central and East Europe

Presentation 1 “Central and East European situation and the need for fuzzy approaches”

Maros Finka

- Key issue addressed is the difference between soft and fuzzy and whether fuzzy spaces would be a better term to describe the topic of this workshop and research.
- Softness of the spaces is the feature of social spaces, relates to the perceived quality of spatial framework for human activities and processes, to the development flexibility and openness for self- definition and self organization processes
- Fuzziness of the space relates to the definition of belonging and un/ certainty in it, can be defined as the feature of natural as well as social spaces
- Discusses history and recent examples of Slovakia and more specifically Central Europe that are characterised by fuzziness.
- Draws a comparison to neuro-networks as a possible model for organising soft spatial governance. Neuro-fuzzy spatial system as a concept for the new structures in the knowledge-based fuzzy territorial systems with high innovation potential, creative environment and self-learning abilities.

Presentation 2 “Soft space governance – the case of Poland”

Iwona Sagan

- In the Polish context a dichotomy can be observed between the need for soft metropolitan governance models and the hard nature of institutional, legal and mental constraints.
- Regional level is extremely weak. Local and national administrations are dominant.
- Basically, in order to overcome the current challenges, two models of governance are proposed and discussed in Poland: 1. A hard metropolitan government policy approach, which blends the annexation of unwilling municipalities with a strong centralised metropolitan power, and 2) a public choice approach which, after only twenty years of local government independence, disagrees with reducing local power, sees market competitiveness as the best mechanism to coordinate the provision of basic services in metropolitan areas and celebrates the fragmentation of governance, which, considering the recent past, it sees as advantageous.
- Soft governance as a compromise is declared by all, but practiced by no one. This is mainly due to several institutional obstacles in which much of the old culture sounds through.
- The new economic reality desires a more strategic rather than a prescriptive planning. However, planning is still connoted to the socialist system and faded away to the periphery of decision making. Whereas new spatial planning and development laws provide municipalities with opportunities to determine to what extent they want to regulate their territories, little is done in this direction. Without a plan the municipality still holds control of ‘development decisions’ due to a certain legal instrument which has overriding power to local frameworks as well as public participation.
- ‘Site development decisions’ for public interest projects have even more flexibility and provide the municipality with even more direct power. However, they only can be applied if there is no land use plan. The effect is that plan coverage in cities is rather limited (15% in Krakow, 10% in Warsaw) and that market parties actually are given a free hand by the local municipality to shape urban public spaces. Another effect is the country wide phenomenon of chaotic, scattered and lacking investment in infrastructure.

Presentation 3 “Local administration reform in Hungary: multi-purpose microregional associations as an example of soft spaces?”

Giancarlo Cotella

- The post-socialist institutional context, 20 years after the local governments act, in Hungary is extremely fragmented, with over 3000 independent municipalities of which over 90% with less than 5000 inhabitants. Despite several attempts the meso level is almost non-existent. This has led to a paradoxical situation of a strong central government and independent local administrations, which for their financing in fact are heavily dependent. The system operates in efficiently, at high costs with a lacking output and therefore decreasing support and trust in local government. The situation can further be characterised by insufficient skills and resources to deliver public services and a lack of interest in inter municipal cooperation.
- In order to improve this situation, in 2004 Hungarian government introduced the *multi-purpose micro-regional associations*, as a first step of a new public administration reform. The legal objective of this new type of associations is to allow for a concerted development of micro-regions, through the preparation and implementation of collective plans and programmes and, furthermore, the improvement of organization and delivery of public services on the micro-regional territory
- The outcome is mixed. Joint planning initiatives have been at best sporadic. Attempts are highly heterogeneous, as under the auspices of an association duties are carried out in several ways – entirely by the multipurpose associations or through so-called single-purpose municipal associations characterized by variable geometry. The result, within each micro-region, is a series of soft-spaces whose borders are extremely flexible and depending each time on the task to be dealt with. Of further interest is the character of a process where the government, incapable to promote a micro-regional reform due to constitutional constraints, puts all the responsibility for organizing and carrying out the latter upon local actors.

Discussion

Clearly the three countries represent a different case than the previous discussed cases. It was commonly felt that indeed soft space approaches would be appropriate but do not come off the ground easily because of the institutional constraints and cultures. From that perspective the post-socialist countries form a sort of laboratory for understanding the relation between soft space approaches and institutional requirements. It also is clear that instruments and approaches used elsewhere work out differently, or do not work at all, in different institutional settings. Some of the cases, it was noted, represent an extreme situation, in particular the Polish case.

Morning Session 2: Developing a framework for analysis (Part 2)

Presentation 1 "Metagovernance as a way to foster democratic decision making in planning for soft spaces"

Bodil Darmgaard

- The focus of the presentation is on the use of governance networks as a tool of innovation and production of public policies. More in particular the focus is on meta-governance: 'the governance of governance', or 'the regulation of self-regulation', which seems to be highly relevant for soft space approaches.
- Key challenges related to network governance are 1) establishing democratic anchorage, and 2) developing methods to measure the efficiency of network governance.
- In this context meta governance is defined as follows: Efforts by public authorities or private actors aimed at coordinating and directing fragmented processes of regulation and public policy production.
- Governance = governing many fragments of governing processes. In so doing it is about:
 - Interaction between hierarchy, market, networks
 - Metagovernance is not only about choosing the 'right' governance instrument or 'governance mix', but also about the increasing awareness of narratives
 - The 'soft' and 'hard' law (space) divide is artificial and they are mutually constitutive
- Basically there are two models to follow with regard to meta-governance: 1) Set the rule of the game (hands-off), with emphasis on Network design & framing, or 2) Participate in the game (hands-on) with emphasis on network management & participation
- A governance network obtains democratic legitimacy if it: 1) is tied to democratically elected politicians, 2) represents the rank-and-file of the participating organizations, 3) is accountable to its citizenry (territorially defined), 4) follows democratic rules internally
- Common ground between soft spaces and meta-governance: multi-level gov, multiple actors and fuzzy boundaries. Main differences: soft spaces are about spatial development and temporal issues, whereas meta governance is about public policy and permanent policy issues.

Presentation 2 "Different modes of Leadership and Citizenship – Consequences for soft spaces"

Panagiotis Getemis

- Various models of leadership are presented and assessed in terms of effectiveness in a variety of contexts. It is interesting to see that some models work in one context, but do not sort much effect in others.
- Focus in a large research project was on legitimacy, in terms of input, output and throughput, as a result of style of leadership.
- Several forms of leadership are identified and discussed:
 - Strong mayor (France, Spain, Greece, Italy)
 - Committee leader (DK, SE and UK)
 - Collective form (B, NL)
 - Council manager (Fin, Nor, Ire, USA)

- Styles:
 - Visionary
 - Caretaker
 - Consensual facilitator
 - City boss
- Community involvement:
 - Full inclusion
 - Selective inclusion – certain stakeholders
 - Deliberative mode – consensus
 - Aggregate mode – focused on decision, even without consensus
- In general a trade off can be observed between input and throughput on the one hand and output on the other, with compromises being the natural outcome.
- With regard to soft spaces with fuzzy boundaries it is as yet difficult to apply the model above, due to the yet still loose definition.

Presentation 3 “Spatial Strategy as the way forward for planning soft spaces? The case ‘Perspective Munich’”

Michael Dross

- This presentation discusses the use of and focus on soft spaces as a helpful tool in developing a long terms spatial development perspective on Munich. In so doing relevant resources, such as evidence and data, and constraints, such as declining budgets, changing demography and climate change are discussed.
- Key questions asked: how to integrate spatial development projects with long-term zoning? How to integrate sector politics? How to differentiate between scales, between the city as a whole and individual places and locations? How to start new creative processes and by means of what methods and instruments?
- It is shown, based on practical experience, that a step-by-step approach was developed and successful in drafting a long term perspective. Elements of this approach contain:
 - Developing general guiding principle and strategic guidelines by asking ‘what are specific challenges for Munich?’
 - Guidelines remained abstract, but became more focused after relating elements to specific locations and places
 - These ‘focus areas’, which bear the characteristics of soft spaces with fuzzy boundaries, albeit it on a local level, have subsequently been further developed, visualised and simplified together with stakeholders.
 - Focus areas are zones where different approaches and topic overlap.

Discussion

With a quite heterogenous collection of presentations the discussion was a bit unfocused. Questions were related to the governance networks, and what could be considered democratic rules within them? This relates closely to one of the perceived weak points of soft space governance approaches. There are no definite answers yet to this question. Also it was observed that the several styles of leadership may pose very different challenges to different countries and regions as a result of their incomparable cultural political contexts. In this sense it was quite refreshing to see the practical approach taken in Munich, although also here questions were raised with regard to the democratic status and the participation rate: who participates, and on the basis of which grounds?

Afternoon Session 1: Experimental approaches

Presentation 1 “Planning for soft spaces with fuzzy boundaries: Cross-border experiences of Slovenia”

Natasa Pichler-Milanovic

- Comprehensive overview of primarily European Union funded cross border cooperation projects and programmes Slovenian partners are involved in.
- One of the effects of these cooperation processes, which usually deal with soft (because not statutory) spaces, is the softening up, to some extent, of the national border.

Presentation 2 “Taking Responsibility for the City: Civil Society, Soft Spaces and Urban Planning in Hamburg”

Frank Othengrafen and Jörg Knieling

- Presentation highlights the way in which civic society and civic engagement come into being and how they influence the traditional policy making process in Hamburg.
- Stimulating civic engagement and participatory policy making is generally a government objective, but one that is difficult to deal with. What happens if the traditional position of government is becoming under pressure? This is in a nutshell what is happening in Hamburg.
- As a reaction on ‘megalomaniac’ projects by the Hamburg government citizens have come to, firstly, protest locally to a variety of initiatives, secondly, organise the various independent action groups under an umbrella organisation called ‘Recht auf Stadt’ (which translates as something like ‘Right to control and live in the city as we want’) and, thirdly, influence on a permanent basis the government and the way decision making processes are organised.
- Softness of spaces is here not necessarily related to the geographical boundaries, but in particular to the powers that shape it. In Hamburg the traditional powers have softened, which allows civic engagement and the inclusion in projects of more social, green and soft factors.

Presentation 3 “The greater Helsinki Vision 2050”

Peter Ache

- Creating a Helsinki metropolitan region, composed of 14 municipalities, proves to be hard in terms of formulating joint visions. The region, albeit composed of fourteen clearly territorially demarcated areas, can formally speaking be regarded a soft space. Also despite municipal boundaries, it is clear that some areas are more territorially integrated than other parts of it. How to unite these independent parts into one space?
- A competition which received more than a hundred submissions out of which nine winners were selected highlighted a few things:
 - Issue of identity in relation to spaces and places. This remains a moot point for creating overall visions for areas such as Helsinki greater region, in which there is not felt much of a common identity.
 - The relation with formal spaces concerns an issue too. Whereas it is easy to develop sweeping visions, putting them into practice with several authorities on the steering wheel that are all in need for democratic legitimation of their decisions, proves to be hard. No easy solutions.
 - Finland has been in a crisis in the 1990s, which significantly influences current day policy making and puts welfare state high on the agenda. This conflicts with the idea of neo-liberal competition between city regions.

Discussion

There has not been much of a discussion after the final three presentations, which were rather difficult to link. Also, participants had become tired and anticipated the final overall discussion. However what was noted was the issue of identity of place and the importance of it to citizens. This message sounded clearly through in the Hamburg and Helsinki examples, that both also indicated that we should start thinking of alternative modes of governing urban and metropolitan areas.

Discussion, reflection and conclusions - day 2

Jörg Knieling

The day was closed with a final plenary discussion which aimed to look back at the past two days and draw some preliminary conclusions. To this end Joerg Knieling provided a sort of general introduction based on his impressions of the workshop. Issues that were raised include:

- Central and East European countries and regions seem to form a sort of spatial development laboratory from which states with more mature spatial planning systems could draw lessons. In particular the lack of land use management regulations which open the way for heavily neo-liberal influenced and poorly legitimised activities and decisions should open the eyes of those politicians that increasingly regard spatial planning and land use planning regulation as redundant and hampering development.
- A research question related to the management of governing of soft spaces and fuzzy boundaries this concerns the role and possibilities of meta-governance approaches in combination with styles of leadership and how these shape the conditions for soft spaces to develop in a democratically sound way.
- Questions behind soft spaces that need further attention include:
 - The drivers behind the emergence of soft spaces
 - The exact object of analysis when looking at soft spaces
 - What is the distinction between soft space approaches and territorial governance, co-operation, informal planning etc. In other words there is a need for further conceptual clarity and more precise definitions if we want to further explore the concept.

4. Results, contribution to the future direction of the field, outcome

Outcomes, results and research questions

What are soft spaces? Or, as Wiechmann asks (see above – discussion day 1), what are they not? The question of definition still needs to be solved it was felt among the participants. In so doing, rather than presenting definite outcomes, the workshop mainly has produced and identified questions for further research. Outcomes and research questions are merely treated as one and the same.

In terms of conceptual clarity it was felt among the participants that there is a clear relation between 'content' of the soft space and 'drivers' in which content could act as an analytical parameter in order to distinguish between various types of soft spaces. The drivers were mostly linked to strategies of stakeholders underlying and whether they are development oriented (perhaps favouring a limited number of stakeholders) or, in contrast, are aiming at resistance.

The issue of softening and hardening; i.e. of spaces becoming softer in terms of institutional control or, as regularly seen a reflex of politicians, becoming harder due to imposing new forms of organisation on top of a previously soft space, such as is happening in the case of the Baltic Sea Region. A clear research line would be to explore what happens to the cooperation and its contents in a region that moves from soft to hard or vice versa.

An additional perspective was put on soft spaces in a sense of regarding them as temporary arrangements from the perspective of transition management. This might be what countries and regions have in common. In most places planning policies are in a stage of transition reflecting a broader development from welfare state to a new type of state model in which a new balance is to be found within society, with some countries clearly moving into the direction of neoliberalism and others aiming to sustain a degree of collectivism albeit adapted to new forms of society.

Given the increasing complex and intricate interrelationships in society it was generally concluded and accepted that soft spaces with fuzzy boundaries have simply become 'a fact of life'.

In terms of a research agenda three clear directions of research have been identified:

- Soft spaces as an object of study, i.e. interpretations, contents, form etc. Are they new, are the more numerous

- Soft spaces as an analytical tool, i.e. to better understand the development of space and place.
- Soft spaces as a deliberative strategy

The relation between soft spaces and spatial planning concerns another field of interest. It was felt that planning is increasingly less able or less important as a means to develop new forms of territoriality. Land use management may, in contrast, be more suitable to deal with emerging soft spaces and their fuzzy and fluid characteristics. If this is indeed true there is a need to critically assess the role and relevance of planning policies against:

- the changing geographies characterised by overlapping, more fluid and networked patterns,
- the changing relation between government and society/market
- the change of welfare states to new models of society

Follow-up activities

In general there was a very positive spirit during and at the end of the workshop and a genuine feeling that we had been venturing into new territory. A pro-active attempt was made to identify follow up activities and opportunities for joint research. The following objectives and potential means have been identified:

Sustaining and elaborating the soft space network

- the COST programme was identified as an appropriate and potential means to continue our joint research interest.
- Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, Cambridge (MA) was identified and recognised as a potential interested party to co-operate which. They have a substantial track record where it concerns the organising of workshops and publishing of books.
- Future workshops: two workshops are being organised by two of participants, one in Valencia (June 2011) and one in Stockholm (September 2011) where soft spaces and related issues will be discussed by at least a number of the participants of this ESF exploratory workshop.

Funding for joint research

Funding opportunities are less obvious for large networks such as present at the workshop. Among several participants there has nevertheless been expressed the intention to jointly develop research proposals focusing on soft spaces or similar themes. Currently a proposal is drafted for a research grant jointly offered by the German, French, UK and Dutch research councils, to be submitted in September 2011. Also some participants have already jointly submitted a tender for ESPON study on territorial governance (see: <http://www.espon.eu/>).

Publications

It was commonly felt that the topic lends itself for an innovative publication in the field of planning and territorial governance and that presentations could be elaborated into full papers and articles. A principle agreement was made to investigate the possibilities of publishing a special issue and editing a book. Although a suitable and highly regarded publisher has been identified who expressed interest in a book on this theme, there has been no time yet to further elaborate a proposal. The same applies to developing a special issue. On an individual basis several participants have submitted manuscripts to journals already.

5. Final programme

PROGRAMME

Wednesday 8 December 2010 – Evening

Evening *Informal drink and simple meal*
18:30 – 22:00 *Restaurant: Café Belvedere*
Location: Beestenmarkt 8, Delft

Thursday 9 December 2010 – Morning

Chair: Andreas Faludi

08.30-09.00 *Arrival of participants*

09.00-09.20 **Welcome and opening**
Bas Waterhout

09.20-10.40 **Morning Session 1: Setting the scene**

Presentation 1 “Planning and governance for soft spaces - the plan for the workshop”
Bas Waterhout

Presentation 2 “Soft spaces and neoliberal spatial governance”
Phil Allmendinger & Graham Haughton

10.20-10.40 **Discussion**

10.40-11.00 *Coffee / tea Break*

11.00-12.30 **Morning Session 2: Developing a framework for analysis (Part 1)**

Presentation 1 “Planning in neo-liberal times: Literature Survey 1990-2010 of Neo-liberal Policies for Urban Development”
Tore Sager

Presentation 2 “Postpolitics in planning: the case of Brussels Airport”
Stijn Oosterlynck

Presentation 3 “Fuzzy images and possibility spaces. Using visualisations for spatial strategies”
Agnes Förster

12.00-12.30 **Discussion**

12.30-13.30 *Lunch*

Thursday 9 December 2010 – Afternoon

Chair: **Dominic Stead**

- 13.30-15.00** **Afternoon Session 1: Transnational Soft spaces**
- Presentation 1 “When soft spaces harden: The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region”
Peter Schmitt and Jonathan Metzger
- Presentation 2 “Flexible Geographies in Transnational Planning – an EU Macro Regional Strategy for the Danube Region on the way”
Alois Humer
- Presentation 3 “Territorialisation of cross border cooperation? Spatial development in the Greater Region (former ‘Saar-Lor-Lux+’)”
Tobias Chilla
- 14.30-15.00 **Discussion**
- 15.00-15.15 *Coffee / tea break*
- 15.15-16.45** **Afternoon Session 2: Domestic cases**
- Presentation 1 “Soft spaces in/across Italy? Emerging explorations in a changing context for planning”
Umberto Janin Rivolin
- Presentation 2 “Planning soft spaces – reflection from Spain”
Ximo Farinos Dasi
- Presentation 3 “From spatial planning to spatial governance or the persistence of modernist strategic spatial planning - The case of housing in the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area”
Jochem de Vries
- 16.15-16.45 **Discussion**
- 16.45-17.00 *Coffee / tea break*
- 17.00-18.00** **Discussion and reflections - day 1**
- Introduction statement
Thorsten Wiechmann
- 19.30** **Joint workshop dinner**
- Restaurant: Café Vlaanderen*
- Address: Beestenmarkt 16, Delft*

Friday 10 December 2010 – Morning

Chair: [Wil Zonneveld](#)

08.30-09.00	<i>Arrival of participants</i>
09.00-10.30	Morning Session 1: Experiences in Central and East Europe Presentation 1 “Central and East European situation and the need for fuzzy approaches” Maros Finka Presentation 2 “Soft space governance – the case of Poland” Iwona Sagan Presentation 3 “Local administration reform in Hungary: multi-purpose microregional associations as an example of soft spaces?” Giancarlo Cotella
10.00-10.30	Discussion
10.30-11.00	<i>Coffee / tea Break</i>
11.00-12.30	Morning Session 2: Developing a framework for analysis (Part 2) Presentation 1 “Metagovernance as a way to foster democratic decision making in planning for soft spaces” Bodil Darmgaard Presentation 2 “Different modes of Leadership and Citizenship – Consequences for soft spaces” Panagiotis Getemis Presentation 3 “Spatial Strategy as the way forward for planning soft spaces? The case ‘Perspective Munich’” Michael Dross
12.00-12.30	Discussion
12.30-13.30	<i>Lunch</i>

Friday 10 December 2010 - Afternoon

Chair: **Andreas Faludi**

- 13.30-15:00** **Afternoon Session 1: Experimental approaches**
- Presentation 1 "Planning for soft spaces with fuzzy boundaries: Cross-border experiences of Slovenia"
Natasa Pichler-Milanovic
- Presentation 2 "Taking Responsibility for the City: Civil Society, Soft Spaces and Urban Planning in Hamburg"
Frank Othengrafen and Jörg Knieling
- Presentation 3 "The greater Helsinki Vision 2050"
Peter Ache
- 14.30-15.00 **Discussion**
- 15.00-15.15 *Coffee / tea break*
- 15.15-16.30** **Discussion, reflection and conclusions - day 2**
- Introduction statements
Anna Geppert
Jörg Knieling
- 16.30-17.00** **Follow ups**
Bas Waterhout
- Practicalities
 - ESF Workshop Scientific Report
 - Publication plan
 - Possibilities for joint research
- 17.00** *Farewell and see you soon drink*

6. Final list of participants

Convenor:

1. **Bas WATERHOUT**
OTB Research Institute for the Built Environment
Delft University of Technology

Participants:

2. **Peter ACHE**
Centre for Urban and Regional Studies (YTK)
Helsinki University of Technology (HUT)
3. **Phil ALLMENDINGER**
Clare College
University of Cambridge
4. **Tobias CHILLA**
University of Luxembourg
Faculté des Lettres, des Sciences Humaines l'Education
5. **Giancarlo COTELLA**
Dipartimento Interateneo Territorio Politecnico di Torino
6. **Bødil DARMGAARD**
Center for Demokratisk Netværksstyring
Institut for Samfund og Globalisering
Roskilde Universitet
7. **Jochem DE VRIES**
Department of Geography
Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences
University of Amsterdam
8. **Michael DROSS**
Lehrstuhl für Raumentwicklung
Institut für Entwerfen, Stadt und Landschaft
Fakultät Architektur
TU München
9. **Joaquín FARINÓS DASÍ**
Dpto. de Gfía. / IIDL
Universitat de València
10. **Maroš FINKA**
Slovak University of Technology Bratislava
11. **Agnes FÖRSTER**
Lehrstuhl für Raumentwicklung
Institut für Entwerfen, Stadt und Landschaft
Fakultät Architektur
TU München
12. **Panagiotis GETEMIS**
Research University Institute of Urban Environmental and Human Resources –
Panteion University

13. **Graham HAUGHTON**
School of Environment and Development
University of Manchester
14. **Alois HUMER**
University of Vienna
Dept. of Geography and Regional Research
15. **Umberto JANIN RIVOLIN**
Dipartimento Interateneo Territorio Politecnico di Torino
16. **Jörg KNIELING**
HafenCity University Hamburg
Regional Planning and Development
17. **Jonathan METZGER**
FORMAS Assistant Professor
Department of Urban Planning and Environment, KTH
Stockholm
18. **Stijn OOSTERLYNCK**
Centre on Inequality, Poverty, Social Exclusion and the City (OASeS)
University of Antwerp
19. **Frank OTHENGRAFEN**
HafenCity University Hamburg
Regional Planning and Development
20. **Nataša PICHLER-MILANOVIĆ**
Re-Forma R&D
Ljubljana
21. **Iwona SAGAN**
Department of Geography at the
University of Gdansk
22. **Tore Øivin SAGER**
Department of Civil Engineering
Faculty of Engineering Science and Technology
Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU)
23. **Peter SCHMITT**
Nordregio - Nordic Centre for Spatial Development
Stockholm
24. **Thorsten WIECHMANN**
TU Dortmund
Faculty of Spatial Planning

Home institution participants

25. **Andreas FALUDI**
OTB Research Institute for the Built Environment
Delft University of Technology
26. **Dominic STEAD**
OTB Research Institute for the Built Environment
Delft University of Technology

27. Wil ZONNEVELD

OTB Research Institute for the Built Environment
Delft University of Technology

Note: Anna Geppert (participant, Sorbonne University) and Rainer Kattel (ESF Representative, University of Tallin) had to cancel the seminar due to illness.

7. Statistical information on participants

Country of affiliation:

Netherlands:	5
Austria:	1
Belgium:	1
Denmark:	1
Finland:	1
Germany:	5
Greece:	1
Italy:	2
Luxembourg:	1
Norway:	1
Poland:	1
Slovakia:	1
Slovenia:	1
Spain:	1
Sweden:	2
UK:	2

Age bracket:

30 – 40:	10
40 – 50:	9
50 – 60:	7
60+:	1

Male/Female: 23/4