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Place-framing and the regulation of mobility flows in metropolitan 'in-between'

By Sophie L. Van Neste

Abstract:

This chapter considers mobility flows through the politics of place, i.e. how the future of a place is negotiated. It aims at proposing a framework to study 'place' arguments in mobility debates, through the notions of place-framing and articulation. The framework is applied at a particular type of place in metropolitan areas, the 'in-between cities', spaces for which metropolitan flows are often emphasized, but the sense of place heavily contested. In the space in-between Rotterdam and The Hague, re-articulations of place with alternative regulations of flows are proposed to counter the building of a new highway.

Keywords: place, place-framing, place-frame, politics of place, politics of mobility, infrastructure, transportation, flows, in-between city, metropolitan in-between, Rotterdam, The Hague, Randstad, Midden-Delfland, Green heart, articulation, discourse, framing, antagonism, geography of governance, car alternatives, automobility, landscape

This chapter takes the broader topic of the book, the intersection of place and flows, through its manifestations in public debates and contentious action. Mobility is defined, following Cresswell (2010), as 'socially produced motion'. Mobility flows are debated in relation to meaning given to place, yet they remain little studied as such. The politics of mobility includes a politics of place. Activists deploy 'place' arguments in mobility debates, while state and private authorities also format and selectively represent places through their regulation of mobility flows.

This chapter considers mobility and flows through the politics of place, i.e. how the future of a place is negotiated. It aims at proposing a framework to study these 'place' arguments in mobility debates. The framework is applied at a particular type of place in metropolitan areas, the 'in-between cities' (Young and Keil 2014), spaces for which metropolitan flows are often emphasized, but the sense of place is forgotten or at least heavily contested. These metropolitan in-between thus constitute key cases from which to start an exploration of place-framing in relation to the regulation of mobility flows. The empirical illustration is based on what appears an emblematic case of a metropolitan in-between, a zone between Rotterdam and The Hague in the southern part of the Randstad, in the Netherlands.

The politics of place, the concept of place-framing

The term *place* has several inter-twined meanings. Agnew (1987) distinguishes between three understandings of place. Place is used to speak of a location, a specific point on the earth. Place is also discussed as a locale, that is, a site as “a setting and scale” at which daily practices and interactions are experienced. Finally, place also refers to the subjective meaning given to the site and/or the location, the “sense of place.”

The *politics of place* is defined by Amin (2004) as the negotiation of spatial juxtaposition on a site. If place is defined as a site of daily practice, shared by its different users and imbued with meaning, Amin (2004, 38) emphasizes how places are “sites of heterogeneity juxtaposed within close spatial proximity, and as sites of multiple geographies of affiliation, linkage and flow.” Different flows and connectivities are hence constitutive of places, intersecting in them “within the same turf.”

The politics of place consists then in the debates between “the different micro-worlds on the same proximate turf,” including those involving flows and connectivities with other places. Amin (2004) proposed to consider spatial juxtaposition as a “field of agonistic engagement.”

This means seeing the local political arena as an arena of claims and counter-claims, agreements and coalitions that are always temporary and fragile, always the product of negotiation and changing intersectional dynamics, always spreading out to wherever a claim on turf or on proximate strangers is made or to where novelty is generated by juxtaposition (Amin 2004, 39).

How can the politics of place as a field of agonistic engagement be concretely studied? I propose to use the notion of place-framing and to ground it in the theory of articulation of Laclau and Mouffe (2001). To start, let's define generally a place-frame as a discursive representation of a place meant to change its planned future. The place-frame is understood as a discourse in the sense of Laclau and Mouffe.

Laclau and Mouffe (2001) conceptualize the constitution of discourse in a theory of articulation, where dominant and counter-discourses elaborate themselves in relation of opposition to one another. Opposing discursive formations try to redefine the same contested terms, but in articulating them with different elements. The meaning given to a term comes from its articulation to others, in what they call a “chain of equivalence.” The meaning of the term “local,” for example, would take a whole different meaning if associated with solidarity and engagement than if associated with particularism and exclusion. In the process of articulation, nodes from dominant discourses are being re-defined by being linked to new discursive elements from the broader discursive field.

The term antagonism is to denote that a new discourse constitutes itself in relation to the discursive opponent. Yet, the term “agonistic engagement,” used by Amin and Mouffe, indicates a situation where actors with different political projects nonetheless “recognize the legitimacy of

their opponents” and the goodness of democratic debates with a diversity of points of views (Mouffe 2005, 20). This is emphasized to note that even if discourses evolve through opposition and that the meaning of place constitutes itself through the intersection, “on the same turf” of contrasted and different perspectives, it does not mean that open war is upon each place. Debates can take place in an agonistic attitude and allow for cordial discussions and even collaborations, even with oppositions in the discourses; yet in some cases the conflict is direct and palpable in concrete interactions.

The term place-framing has particularly been used by Pierce, Martin and Murphy (2011) and Martin (2013) in studying the place-making at work in claim-making. For Pierce, Martin and Murphy (2011, 60), places are “bundles” of the different individual experiences of space, but “place-framing articulates the iterative co-bundling process through which social and political negotiations result in a strategic sharing of place. Place-frames represent only a fraction of any place, the socially negotiated and agreed place/bundle that is rhetorical and politically strategic – not fully a place but a place-frame.”

Place-framing hence means a selective representation of place. If there are numerous subjective senses of place, to act and be heard, one needs to find allies with which to share a powerful representation of place. Martin (2013) uses the term place-frame to emphasize the strategic joint definitions given by activists to places. This includes for her the elaboration of a joint diagnostic structuring the action of a collective and of consensual solutions in space. Situating this in the theory of articulation, the problematization and solutions constitute counter-frames to the dominant framing of place by authorities.

Yet for the solutions and the vision to be implemented in place, activists may have to position themselves in a politics of scale or of territories. McCann (2003) focused on how activists argue for a certain distribution of political power, for example to their neighborhood, in order for their ideal organization of a place to come true. Such strategies have also been documented in the mobilization for car alternatives, especially to change the territory and scale through which public authorities had framed mobility needs in concrete sites (Van Neste and Bherer 2014). The politics of place, as a field of agonistic engagement, could include the contestation of territorial boundaries as natural and immutable, especially when activists feel they imply a certain framing of issues in space. More generally, Nicholls (2008, 849-851) speaks of the form of the regulatory state and its institutions as a “cage,” framing issues in terms of specialized and distinct geopolitical fields, making contestation more difficult. The addition I propose to the term place-frame used by Martin and her colleagues is thus meant to consider explicitly the geography of power involved in the production of place: certain visions of place will be obstructed by the boundaries set by the political powers in place and their framing of place in relation to its existing position in the wider geography of governance. The institutional arrangements, and their specific geographies, do potentially limit the range of possibilities on what a place can become. If these institutional or governance arrangements may limit the political opportunity for a re-framing of place, activists may also strategically denounce them and propose alternative geographies of governance (Gamson and Meyer 1996, Jonas and While 2005).

Place-frames are thus considered discursive chains of equivalence constituted through a process of articulation, in relation to the dominant discourse. Visions of places, with diagnostics and prognostics, are articulated with a particular geography of governance: these different terms of the place-frame are linked in a dependence relation imbued with meaning. Activists articulate the links differently from what the dominant discourse implies, but do so in redefining the same contested terms. This means that if a dominant discourse on place emphasizes a certain framing of mobility flows, mobility flows, to be contested, would need to be given a new meaning by the counter-discourse, through new articulations in relation to place. This new meaning could imply a vision of the place in the future and of its geography of governance allowing for that vision to come true.

The table below summarizes the key notions of the framework, which will be illustrated on the special cases of the metropolitan 'in-betweens'.

Place	Site where daily practices are experienced, to which a subjective and collective meaning is given, where different micro-worlds meet on the same turf
Politics of place	Negotiation of spatial juxtaposition
Place-frame	Selective representation of a place from a collective to have influence in the politics of place including <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A certain problematization of the politics of place 2. A solution in space 3. A geography of governance which would make that solution possible
Articulation	Process through which discourses are elaborated, including place-frames. Articulation implies dynamic inter-relations between dominant discourses and counter discourses re-defining the same contested terms in articulating them with new elements of the discursive field

Table 1. *Definitions of the key notions used to study place-framing*

The case presented to illustrate the framework, a debate concerning a space in-between Rotterdam and The Hague, was documented with a discourse analysis of the transcriptions of parliamentary, municipal and participatory debates, with documents produced by civic and public actors, along with twenty interviews and two focus groups with public officers and activists.

Framing particular places of flows: metropolitan in-betweens and the emblematic case of the southern part of the Randstad

Metropolitan areas are contested political spaces, in which the landscapes defy easy and traditional categorisations (Young and Keil 2014). Beyond the central cities, the rest of the regional or metropolitan spaces may have no clear *common* image, markers, or identity (Dembski 2013). Spaces have been defined as “Zwischenstadt” (Sieverts 2003), “in-between” cities not

corresponding to the old urban core or new suburbs, but “complex urban landscapes of mixed density, use and urbanity” (Young and Keil 2014, 2). They come from an overlap of urban, suburban and rural legacies, and may be residuals left in-between infrastructural networks and re-development sites. Certain sectors are 'disconnected' from the infrastructural networks, crossed by them with yet no access to the population, affecting conditions of accessibility and well-being, of risks and vulnerabilities (Young and Keil 2010, 2014; see Addie and Mettke in this volume). Other sectors contain landscapes which actors wish to keep intact from the more acute pressure of metropolitan flows (Gilbert 2004). Different stakeholders see in them different future purposes.

Scholars have documented efforts to attribute images and identities to metropolitan in-between landscapes, through what Dembski (2013) has coined, for example, “symbolic markers,” spatial projects emphasizing certain meaning to the in-betweens, or through what Boudreau (2007) coined “spatial imaginaries,” linking new imaginaries with existing spatial practices, in using strategic planning tools. Yet these spaces are also characterized by their “in-betweenness” in terms of governance, making this meaning-giving process complex politically, but also selective in the spatial perspectives represented, certain perspective in situ not necessarily having power of say. In-between cities “find little political representation, hardly any symbolic valuation and often become residual terrain in metropolitan governance (Young and Keil 2014, 2).”

The opposition to a new highway segment in-between Rotterdam and The Hague area is an interesting case to discuss this, in a context qualified as “the most fascinating citified landscape in the Netherlands and can be considered as a *Zwischenstadt* par excellence” (Dembski 2013), with the mix of port facilities with industrial, recreative, rural and residential functions between the two core cities (Dembski 2013). The negotiation between these different uses and valuations of place are rooted in a historic planning imaginary in the Netherlands of the “Randstad” and of the “Green Heart.” The Randstad, which is the name and metaphor given to the more urbanized section of the Netherlands, is composed of the four main cities placed in a ring around the “Green Heart” (see Figure 1). For decades, the Randstad has been characterized by a heavy pressure on land. In the Randstad are concentrated not only urban and socio-economic built-uses, but also agricultural production, industries and transport heaviest networks. The Green Heart is meant to provide close green amenities for urban dwellers, strengthen local agriculture and limit the expansion of the urban (Hajer and Zonneveld 2000). In the Randstad, space is tight and well optimized, and open space is considered to be rare. The Green Heart has through the years received some urban satellite growth centers and transport infrastructures, exacerbating fragmentation and the mix of functions, but always with debates on compensation to minimize the impact on the open space (for example, locating parts of highways and trains in tunnels) (Eeten and Roe 2000). Rotterdam and The Hague compose the southern part of the Randstad, and are also separated by an open space (agricultural and recreative) which previous policies have striven to preserve: Midden-Delfland.

In parallel to this ambition for Midden-Delfland, however, a highway segment linking Rotterdam and The Hague and passing through Midden-Delfland, the A4, was planned and debated for decades, and just decided upon recently, with building starting in 2012. Several environmental organizations ended up agreeing to the highway as long as the segment was tunneled (an

agreement which was not respected). Yet, a few months after the approval of the A4, a new highway segment was announced as a priority for Rotterdam and the port, to reduce car congestion. The new highway segment (NWO) would connect the two shores of the Meuse river, on which is located the port of Rotterdam. Two options were considered : a location closer to Rotterdam (Blankenburg option) and going through part of the green area of Midden-Delfland, or one closer to the agglomeration of The Hague (the Oranje option), outside Midden-Delfland. If, in the first case of the Blankenburg option, opponents argued that the consequences on nature and open space would be greater, the segment would, according to the transport analyses from the Minister of Infrastructure and Environment, better respond to the congestion problem in the ring of Rotterdam. A more radical counter-discourse on the protection of Midden-Delfland and its importance for the region was then elaborated, as we will see.

[Figure 1 here]

Figure 1. The Randstad, with its four main cities (Source: Wikipedia, Creative Commons. Modified by Sophie L. Van Neste)

In addition to this hybridity and contested juxtaposition in the uses of the 'in-between', the area is also an emblematic case of a 'metropolitan in-between' because of the governance scheme relating to that landscape. Although their mobility flows and periphery overlap, The Hague and Rotterdam (at a distance of 30 kilometers from one another) have separate spatial planning agendas. They have different priorities for future development and are known to be reluctant to cooperate in regard to each of their peripheral zones (Kreukels 2003), which has made the planning of inter-metropolitan mobility flows difficult (Salet 2008). Each agglomeration has built separate ties with the Minister of Infrastructure and Environment in regard to transport infrastructures. For Salet (2008), these relations are detrimental to a more polycentric planning of the region as a whole. The planning and assessments for infrastructures would still be made in territorial containers, in the urban agglomerations, with no relations between them. In recent years, this privileged container for the relation to the Minister in regard to infrastructure has been further strengthened, in Rotterdam, by the fact that the Rotterdam municipal and agglomeration councils are led by the same political party as the national cabinet.

In addition to this political structure, the Port of Rotterdam, among the most important in the world, is also a key actor in the production of the space in-between the two agglomerations of Rotterdam and The Hague. Spatially, the port area is now much closer to The Hague, but institutionally, it is part of the municipality of Rotterdam. The Port has historically been tied to Rotterdam and participated closely in its development (Kreukels 2003). It has a strong influence on the definition of the zones in-between, yet has been tempered by regulations from the national government, ensuring up to now some buffer zones between the core of industries and residences, for health and nature purposes.

There are municipalities in the relatively open space between Rotterdam and The Hague -- Midden-Delfland, Maasland, Vlaardingen and Schiedam -- which are remnants of older villages spread in the industrial/rural area and have received some of the agglomerations' sprawl. They are

included within the main cities' agglomeration bodies, but as of recently, they cannot oppose decision-making taken at higher scales; they can only voice their concern within the agglomeration arena. In sum, the municipalities "in-between" Rotterdam and The Hague, including Midden-Delfland, have little political say. Rotterdam and The Hague comprise an emblematic case of place-framing in metropolitan in-betweens both because of the characteristic mixed landscape and because of the governance scheme with power differentials in regard to place-framing and the regulation of mobility flows.

Metropolitan in-betweens are hence great cases to consider place-framing and its relation to the regulation of mobility flows because 1) the meaning of the in-betweens as places is far from clear, very much contested and part of on-going debates, and 2) the regulation of mobility flows is tied to a contested status of in-betweenness in the governance scheme, with little power to the local authorities in the metropolitan in-betweens.

Let's now consider the place-frame elaborated to affirm a certain meaning to the space in-between Rotterdam and The Hague in opposition to a highway going through it. The contrast between this place-frame and the spatial articulations of the dominant discourse will then be presented. Finally, the re-articulations, by the civic coalition, of their meaning of place with alternative regulations of flows are presented.

Place-framing: Midden-Delfland in a green metropolis

The new highway segment NWO would go through part of a green open area between Rotterdam and The Hague, Midden-Delfland, if the Blankenburg option was chosen [the Oranje option, in comparison, goes through a more industrial landscape]. The landscape of Midden-Delfland is characteristic of the agricultural and (man-made) meadow landscape of the Dutch country. Yet, the area had been neglected in the past. Starting in 1977, a "reconstruction law" was adopted by the national government to valorize this landscape. The surrounding local municipalities, inhabitants, farmers and nature groups were involved in the 35-year process. Resident associations were also created to ensure the primacy of the "green open character" of the territory. Part of Midden-Delfland had been designated as a "State buffer zone," one of the green open areas to be preserved for the benefit of urban dwellers. This was a particularly important buffer zone, in terms of quality of life and air quality, because of the limit it set to the spreading of industries from the port of Rotterdam.

Yet in the 1990s, a plan of landfill for toxic waste on the site became known to residents; this was the first large breach in the policy for the area's preservation, with justifications pertaining to its position close to the port area. An association was created to block it. On December 12th 1992, almost 8,000 people planted a total of 16,000 trees on the site, which became known as "the People's Woods." The action successfully blocked the landfill project. The Vlaardigen-based group, which had mobilized their whole community for the preservation of the green buffer, re-resuscitated twenty years later to oppose the Blankenburgtunnel which would go through the People's Wood.

The association entered in an opposing coalition with other resident groups, nature protection and environmental organizations, such as Friends of the Earth and Naturemonuments. With regional organizations, local actors positioned the loss for Midden-Delfland not only in relation to the local municipality (as had been done in 1992), but as a loss for the whole region:

“Is the Blankenburgtunnel and highway through our last piece of green space really the solution? No. For if you arrive with no traffic to your work, you nevertheless would like to enjoy cycling through the nice Zuiddbburt or recreate at the Krabbe lake. But there you would see asphalt and hear the traffic hurry. Not really a relaxing situation. Then you would have again the feeling that you live in an inhospitable environment” (personal translation from Dutch, Groeiend Verzet 2011, 1).

In the report Green Metropolis, a utopia was formulated of no more highways in the whole region of Rotterdam and The Hague, for the preservation and accessibility to green open spaces. If this utopia was considered radical even for groups in the opposition to the Blankenburg highway segment, a new consensus had been reached that no more highways in Midden-Delfland were compatible with the preservation of landscape. The value of Midden-Delfland, of this area in-between, for the whole region, giving it identity and coherence, was promoted with slogans, demonstrations, tweet campaigns, videos, maps, images, and direct lobbying with political parties in parliament. The campaign built on existing organizational networks in place between municipalities, farmers, heritage and ecological associations in Midden-Delfland, and on the strong lobby of nature conservation in the Netherlands with the organization Naturemonuments.

The scope of the mobilization was associated to the continuous impinging of highways on the landscape. This new highway segment was presented as bringing irreversible damage to Midden-Delfland, in a dependency loop with ever more roads. The construction of the highway A4 in Midden-Delfland had not yet begun and already it was planned to bring further congestion and necessitate a new highway connection. And after the Blankenburg segment would be built, it seemed that yet another section would be necessary to complete a new ring around Rotterdam, the A24, to deal with increased traffic and congestion. This would be the end of Midden-Delfland, crossed then by three highway segments. The civic actors hence diffused a discourse of Midden-Delfland as constitutive of the urbanized region, but incompatible with the logic of highway extension.

The spatial articulations of the dominant discourse

This place-framing of Midden-Delfland as a green open space constitutive of the region was directly in opposition to the dominant framing of the place by the alliance between the national government and the Rotterdam agglomeration. In the context of the economic crisis, legal provisions for nature conservation were relaxed in the Netherlands, permitting a project of 'national interest' to be built in a natural area if need be (Verschuuren 2010). Transport infrastructures were part of the infrastructures on which public participatory procedures and nature provisions were reduced to ensure their rapid construction, since their building was expected to participate in economic recovery (idem, MIM 2011c). The place-framing from the government hence contains a very different starting point than the ones from civic associations

wishing to protect Midden-Delfland. The emphasis is on congestion, which materializes itself in two focused category of mobility flows in the region.

First are the flows related to the growth of the port of Rotterdam. A large growth of the port is planned for 2030, *Maasvlakte 2*, with an extension of platforms in the sea. New road connections were considered necessary to ensure the port businesses continue their activities without excessive time lost in congestion (expected to occur in 2030), even with the Port Authority's objective to increase freight transport by rail and inland navigation (MVW et al. 2009, Port of Rotterdam 2011). A new river crossing also appeared necessary for safety reasons, since there is at the moment only one main road to leave the port facilities. If an additional exit in case of calamities was important for the justification of the NWO, the Oranje option (outside of Midden-Delfland) scores better on this criterion than the Blankenburg (MIM 2012).

The second focus around which the dominant discourse is framed is the Benelux tunnel, which ought not to be congested, since it would be part of a new economic corridor, the backbone and accessibility axis of South Holland and of the economic route toward Belgium: "there needs to be sufficient capacity in the Benelux tunnel" (MVW et al. 2009, 52, MIM 2012, 8-9). So a second highway crossing of the river, the closest possible to this axis, is needed. The Blankenburg option responds to this priority on the Benelux better than the Oranje option. Yet the choice of this economic route is a selective one which was still under construction at the time, and several actors (independent advisors' council to the state, university professor, the association of car drivers) argued that other strategic links could be built in relation to the Oranje option (College van Rijksadviseurs 2011, Geerlings 2012, ANWB 2011). But this economic route went through the agglomeration of Rotterdam and meant direct investment inside the territory of Rotterdam. For the national government, the Blankenburg option was also cheaper than the Oranje option, where the water crossing is wider and involves a more complex infrastructure. The fight against congestion framing the region in a certain way is thus both linked to a global discourse on the economy of freight flows, and is territorially selective. This fits with the picture depicted by Cidell (2011) that even with a discourse of global freight flows, the spatial imaginaries and territorial priorities from local authorities are determinant for the geography of the transport network. In the case of the NWO, the interests in the growth of the Port (to keep attracting its share of freight global flows) was inter-mingled with the City of Rotterdam's territorial priority for road fluidity and state investments on its territory, through the projected economic transport axis still in becoming.

As for the value of Midden-Delfland, the actors of the dominant discourse maintained that it could be accounted for through compensation measures. The leading governmental coalition put emphasis on the fact that it is not exactly real "nature," but more "recent" nature. Hence the value and attractiveness it had acquired in the last decades could be re-made elsewhere (CDA, Tweede Kamer 2011, 36:76; MIM, Tweede Kamer 2012, 39:76). With the civic mobilization and the opposition from local municipalities and some national political parties, the parliamentary and agglomeration debates largely focused on landscape "integration" to minimize the impacts of the highway. But such measures could only be marginal: only a quarter of the road after the water crossing could be underground, because of the dam and a junction to another highway above

ground. Many discussions hence concerned tunnel technicalities, and little on the other highway route sparing Midden-Delfland, the Oranje option, and even less about no highway at all in the region.

Civic actors had tried to mobilize a “community of fate” (Hajer 2003) around the survival of Midden-Delfland, positioning it in the region's livability, but it had proven insufficient. Their criticism of the logic of highway extension was discussed in strict relation to the threat it posed to Midden-Delfland. The implications for mobility flows were left unspecified, although the governing coalition had a strong discursive articulation linking economic growth with the new highway, particularly the Blankenburg option. At that point, it seemed that the debate about mobility flows could not be avoided.

Three re-articulations of place and flows to save Midden-Delfland

The civic coalition debated mobility flows and their intersection with Midden-Delfland in three ways. First, in showing alternative mobility modes with less impact on the place; second in changing the territorial scope of the traffic studies and participatory process, and third in re-considering the actual growth in mobility flows, through trends toward its 'de-materialization' in virtual connections and flexible working locations. In considering solutions to the intersection of place and mobility flows, activists also tackled directly the geography of their governance.

Alternative types of mobility flows

From the beginning, the place-framing from the civic coalition attacked directly issues of mobility, but it was put aside by civic leaders because of its “radical character.” Friends of the Earth Netherlands had emphasized mobility issues in its plan called “Building a Green Metropolis,” submitted to the province as a “citizen initiative.” The plan illustrated a set of alternatives to avoid all highways planned by the government in the region. It included eight public transport investment projects. To further reduce car traffic and finance the public transit projects, the report Green Metropolis advocated the introduction of a pricing system for car use and freight transport. In a context in which the national authorities did not go through with a national congestion charge (this had been put aside in 2010, canceling engagement from the previous government), Friends of the Earth proposed to set up a pricing system at the *metropolitan scale* of Rotterdam and The Hague. What Friends of the Earth proposed was hence a metropolitan project of car regulation and public transit. It received relatively little support. It was considered a real joke by the right wing party leading the governing coalition in parliament, “like a pie in the sky” (VVD in Tweede Kamer 2011, 8). In the agglomeration and the province, the comparison made by Friends of the Earth between the area, which they characterize as “a port area.” with the successful congestion charge in London, was really considered too far of a stretch:

“The port area and the Westland are really not to compare to a success example such as the center of London. The connections in public transit to the port area and the Westland are problematic because of the spreading of destinations. There are also large freight flows from the greenport and mainport which need to move at an exact moment (just in

time), making it difficult to conduct by boat or train. A regional congestion charge is hence expected to have little positive effects” (*translated from Dutch*, PZH 2012, 2).

Considering another territorial scope to define place and evaluate mobility flows

Although this first attempt of re-framing mobility flows to protect place received limited support, it evolved into two other ways to critique the regulation of mobility flows in the region. In the report “Building a Green Metropolis” from Friends of the Earth, the term “metropolis” was used as a scale to plan mobility beyond individual cities' interests, with a congestion charge (Milieudefensie 2011). In keeping aside the more radical proposition of no highway, the other civic actors went on to criticize the territorial selectivity of the infrastructural choice. Naturemonuments and the local opponents to the Blankenburg tunnel took the lead and asked for a broader territorial scope to the traffic study justifying the NWO. Their critique was the following. The analysis from the national government focused too much on the ring of Rotterdam, the Benelux tunnel especially and the access to the port (see above), and did not evaluate the traffic implications of the inter-relation with the agglomeration of The Hague. This would have strong implications for the choice of the localization, since a focus on Rotterdam favored the Blankenburg tunnel option in contrast to the other option. The territory of the traffic engineering analyses objectified the focus on specific segments linked with economic priorities, argued the civic actors. They stated that accessibility to economic destinations could not be the sole objective for a region; the scope needed to be broadened and discussed. This territorial re-framing was abundantly used in parliament by opposition parties to put in doubt both the traffic study justifying the choice of the Blankenburg and the participatory process, which appeared very narrow. The project went through several steps of debate between parliamentary members, with political parties asking accurate information, causing delays. For several months, the civic actors' campaign used this territorial argument in their focus on place protection. Yet, after the majority votes for the Blankenburg option in parliament and within the Rotterdam agglomeration, the sense of a need for a highway segment serving economic prosperity seemed to be an inevitable topic to address.

The de-materialization of mobility flows

A new leader from Naturemonuments took the leadership of the campaign; he was based within the region of Midden-Delfland and had been involved in highway oppositions before. The perspective on the “risk” and radical character of contesting mobility flows to protect Midden-Delfland changed with his involvement. With his new leadership, the need for mobility flows *on* highways, and the necessary condition of highway flows for economic growth, was directly contested. The leader also presented the protection of this green open space as a duty toward the region's residents. This contrasted with the previous attitude to place the organization had voiced, which considered legitimate the port needs and had accepted nature compensation measures elsewhere. As explained in the place-frame, the new segment seemed to bring irreversible damage which could not be accepted; other regulations of flows had to be put in place.

Digging into the statistics on mobility flows, the leader pointed toward a change in mobility trends, documented by the State independent mobility agency, but not accounted for in the

models justifying the new highway (MIM 2012; NWO Projectorg. 2011). Since 2005, the number of kilometers traveled nationally and regionally had reduced and the growth in kilometers by cars (and since 2008 road freight transport) had begun to stagnate (KIM 2012). An increasing annual growth in car use was not the reality; hence the need for the new highway should be re-evaluated on these facts. The content of the critique was also closely tied to programs in which the government, the Rotterdam agglomeration and the Port were involved closely, at an unprecedented extent in comparison to other countries and regions of the world: facilitating the entrepreneurial movement for flexible work schedule and flexible work space, made possible by virtual flows of connections (employees could work at home, in coffee working centers, with virtual meeting platforms, etc.) (PSWSR 2012). In other spheres of governance, this “smart working = smart traveling” was proudly presented by these same authorities as proof of their innovation in the tackling of congestion, through a de-territorialization of mobility flows at peak hours. The growing numbers of employees working at home or in a flexible time schedule significantly reduced peak hour congestion, *hence* reducing the need for new highways, the civic actors argued. But the above mentioned trio still considered that this trend should not yet affect large transport investments decisions, the risks of delaying large transport investment in context of congestion being too high for businesses (Int SR, Int PR, MIM 2011b).

Despite the documented changes in mobility, after two years of delays and debates on the NWO, and national elections in 2012, the leading party VVD regained leadership of the governing coalition and explicitly included in the coalition agreement the implementation of the Blankenburg option for the new highway (ensuring a majority and no further discussions in parliament). The arenas of dialogue had been closed, and the last critique left un-answered.ⁱ

In sum, the place-frame of “Green metropolis” in relation to Midden-Delfland evolved in its articulation of place and flows. The desire to preserve the green open character of Midden-Delfland remained throughout as a defining characteristic for the regional space. The new government, however, proclaimed the right to construct a (second) highway segment through the place. The reason given was the economic urgency of fighting congestion. This discourse co-produced by Rotterdam, the Port and the national government presented Midden-Delfland as a sum of characteristics that could either be preserved by mitigating the impacts of the road, or compensated by in re-investments for nature in other sites. The civic coalition engaged into the discursive work of showing the incompatibility of the highway with the place. Midden-Delfland had been reduced to a space in-between cities characterized by the “missing highway segments.” Much of the debate against the NWO was structured around these lines: “Can Midden-Delfland survive the highway?”, “Can the region survive the highway?: but also, in the dominant discourse, “Can the region survive *without* the highway?” The opponents hence had to directly tackle the regulation of mobility flows, which they did in three ways, building on existing trends and discourses available in the field: first in proposing alternative types of mobility flows, second in changing the territorial scope for the assessments of mobility flows, and third in emphasizing the de-materializing of mobility flows through virtual connections and flexible work locations.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the intersection of mobility flows and place was considered through a concrete public debate. This concrete public debate provided an opportunity to reach two objectives. First, to consider the process of place-framing in debates on mobility flows, i.e. how selective representations of a place are elaborated dynamically by collectives as counter-discourses to dominant ones. Second, to consider the specificity of the 'metropolitan in-betweens' as places of flows, through their discursive and regulatory construction.

We saw that the meaning-giving to Midden-Delfland, and through it to the fuzzy metropolitan region around it, was articulated in relation to the conflict with the proposed highway. This meaning-giving process corresponds to 'place-framing'. One of the questions posed by studying place-framing in a politics of place defined as a negotiation of spatial juxtaposition (Amin 2004), was whether actors could, with place-frames, tackle the issue of the regulation of mobility flows (and not *per se* exclude them from their representation of a 'natural' or 'authentic' sense of place). In this Dutch case, actors opposing the highway had direct attachments to place and defined their mission in relation to that place (and little in relation to mobility flows, the majority being nature or resident based organizations), but they still tackled mobility flows and their geography of governance to react to the framing of public authorities. The adaptable place-frame constituted a tool of collective action, working on the level of both representations of a site and its embeddedness in a wider territory and web of mobility flows; each raising specific issues in the geography of governance. The issues raised went beyond place, and touched upon the politics of mobilizing for car alternatives in urban and metropolitan areas (Henderson 2013; Van Neste and Bherer 2014), as well as on the politics of infrastructure in city-regions, tied up in specific territorial alliances among public authorities and private ones (Jonas et al. 2013). If these issues went beyond Midden-Delfland, they were tackled in a tentative redefinition of the whole region of Rotterdam and The Hague and of its regulation of mobility flows, as a Green Metropolis.

I chose the case of the "in-betweens" to particularly focus on the articulation of place and flows in a co-constructing process. Metropolitan in-betweens are not urban cores nor exurbia suburbs, but between them, in the spaces where infrastructures hosting the flows of the agglomerations tend to concentrate. "In-between" metropolitan spaces are constituted by metropolitan flows and other hybrid uses *in situ*, implying constant negotiations. The Dutch case I presented could have been analyzed as a case of a social mobilization against the destruction of green open space. Yet, such a perspective would be truncated without considering the positionality of that open space in the metropolitan region and how this positionality has meant through time a certain sense of place, even if a negotiated and constantly contested one. The contrast between an ideal of a past inherited true sense of place separate from flows, and the perspective of a co-construction with flows (Massey 1994), appears particularly obvious in the politics of place for the metropolitan in-betweens. Yet, to many extents, this contrast could also be made for any busy street corner of a city, or within any suburban quarter faced with new transport corridors (Cidell, this volume). Cities and metropolitan areas are full of places of flows, even though they may not all be framed as such.

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